



Robert L.J. Shaw

The Celestine Monks of France, c.1350–1450

Observant Reform in an Age of Schism, Council and War

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Cover illustration: A miniature of the renunciation of St Peter Celestine (Celestine V), found in a copy of the Celestine constitutions (*Celestines of Avignon – Saint-Pierre Célestin, c.1380s*); Avignon, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 727, fol. 1r.
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Abbreviations

Avignon, BM	Avignon, Bibliothèque municipale
Metz, BM	Metz, Bibliothèque municipale
Paris, Arch. Nat.	Paris, Archives nationales
Paris, BnF	Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France
Paris, BA	Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal

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Introduction: The Celestine monks of France and the rise of ‘Observant’ reform

The history of the Celestine monks of France – or to give them their full, contemporary title ‘the Celestine brothers of the province of France and adjacent regions’ – in the late Middle Ages has until recently lain buried.¹ It is the history of a congregation that no longer exists, a self-governing province of an Italian Benedictine reform of thirteenth-century origin that likewise no longer exists, and which has received very little subsequent attention. Compared to many other monastic reforms, the volume of work on the French Celestines is slight; in fact, the Celestines as a whole remain one of the least studied medieval monastic congregations. Only one modern monograph has focused on them, Karl Borchardt’s *Die Cölestiner*, an excellent study of the order’s entire institutional history, which covers their presence in Italy as well as France.² Beyond this, there is a body of work on their early Italian foundations,³ while a small number of doctoral theses and articles have devoted some attention to their French wing.⁴

1 This is the title used in the first edition of constitutions compiled by the self-governing French Celestines, c.1420: Avignon, BM, MS 728, fol. 1r: ‘Incipit tabula in Constitutiones fratrum Celestinorum provincie Francie et partium eidem adjacentium.’

2 K. Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner: eine Mönchsgemeinschaft des späteren Mittelalters* (Husum, 2006).

3 On the early Celestine order, see especially L. Pellegrini, ‘Dall’Ordo Morronensium all’Ordo Celestinorum’, in *Il monachesimo italiano nel secolo della grande crisi: atti del V Convegno di studi storici sull’Italia benedettina*, ed. G.G. Picasso and M. Tagliabue (Cesena, 2004), 327–49. For earlier works, see A. Moscati, ‘I monasteri di Pietro Celestino’, *Bullettino dell’Istituto storico italiano per il medioevo* 68 (1956), 91–163; M. Galluppi, *La badia benedettina di Santa Maria di Faifoli* (Rome, 1929).

4 C. Sustrac, ‘Les Célestins de France: essai sur leur histoire et leur constitutions’, École des Chartes, PhD thesis (1899, now Paris, Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève MSS 3904–3905); F. Isaac, ‘Les Célestins de Paris, étude historique et archéologique’, École des Chartes, PhD thesis (1965); O.H. McIntyre, ‘The Celestines of Paris: monastic life and thought in the sixteenth century’, Stanford University, PhD thesis (1984); S. Comte, ‘Les Célestins, le roi et le pape: les monastères d’Avignon et de Gentilly et le pouvoir’, *Provence historique*, 186 (1996), 229–51; S. Comte, ‘Les Célestins du Midi, une antenne de la cour de France à Avignon?’, *Cahiers de Fanjeaux*, 39 (2004), 175–208; S. Comte, ‘Vivre dans la société des Célestins: les familiers laïcs à travers les “martyrologes” de l’ordre’, in *Vivre en société au Moyen Âge: Occident chrétien VI^e–XV^e siècle*, ed. D. Le Blèvec and H. Taviani-Carozzi (Aix-en-Provence, 2008), 293–305; M. Chazan, ‘La Chronique des Célestins de Metz (XIV^e–XV^e siècle)’, in *Écrire l’histoire à Metz au Moyen Âge*, ed. M. Chazan and G. Nauroy

This lack of attention, however, is a grave injustice on every level. The history that will emerge in the course of this book is of a congregation that reached a significant apex of cultural impact and influence around the turn of the fifteenth century, on a scale disproportionate to its relatively small, albeit growing, size in this period. Theirs was a journey which has much to tell the modern reader about the ideals and practice of late medieval monastic reform; they represent one of the most prominent groups in France to label themselves as ‘Observant’ in this period, a banner for a wave of reform efforts across multiple orders of which the importance is only now coming to be fully understood.⁵ But they also represent a powerful example of the potential that still lay within the ties that bound monasticism and wider society together. It is the history not only of a monastic congregation but of those bonds that this book sets out to uncover.

The Celestines and the French Celestines

Who were these somewhat forgotten monks? The Celestines had their origins in Italy. They were founded by a hermit, Pietro da Morrone, later canonized as St Peter Celestine (c.1215–1296), who, according to his earliest biographers,⁶ had first lived as a Benedictine monk at Santa-Maria di Faifoli in the Molise region before becoming a solitary in the caves of the Abruzzo mountains.⁷ He became well known there for his asceticism and poverty, apparently maintaining himself with only the poorest clothing and food, and fasting every day except Sunday. He was also especially noted for his

(Berne, 2011), 113–52; M. Chazan, ‘Le couvent des célestins de Metz: jalons pour l’analyse d’un succès’, in *Les Gens d’Église et la ville au Moyen Âge dans les pays d’entre-deux* (2013), Centre de Recherche Universitaire Lorrain d’Histoire, <http://cruh.univ-lorraine.fr/sites/cruh.univ-lorraine.fr/files/documents/mireillechazan.pdf> (accessed 19 May 2018); F. Gadby, ‘Les Célestins en France: les lettres de Jean Bertauld’, in *Da Celestino Vall’Ordo Coelestinorum*, ed. M.G. Del Fuoco (L’Aquila, 2005), 267–86; M. Lamy, ‘Pierre Poquet: un maître spirituel chez les Célestins’, in *Expériences religieuses et chemins de perfection dans l’Occident médiéval: études offertes à André Vauchez par ses élèves*, ed. D. Rigaux, D. Russo and C. Vincent (Paris, 2012), 391–408.

5 See below (14–15) for a discussion of ‘Observant’ reform.

6 *Die ältesten Viten Papst Celestins V (Peters vom Morrone)*, ed. P. Herde, *MGH SRG*, n.s., xxiii (2008), provides editions of three texts which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2; P. Herde, *Cölestin V* (Stuttgart, 1981), provides the best modern account of his life.

7 *Die ältesten Viten*, 114; *Vita C* (‘Tractatus de vita et operibus atque obitu ipsius sancti viri’), written in 1306 or earlier, states that the abbot of Santa Maria in Faifoli had first given him the habit.

penitential efforts, maintaining arduous cycles of repeated genuflections and prayers for this purpose.⁸ His devotion rapidly attracted followers whom Peter organized into communities, their first being founded close to one of his hermitages at Mount Maiella.⁹ These communities would not develop along the semi-eremitic lines of the Carthusians or the Camadolese brothers of St Peter Damian, but rather into a distinctive reform of the Benedictines, the coenobitic order in which Peter had professed prior to becoming a hermit.¹⁰ Peter and his followers were officially incorporated into the Order of St Benedict in 1264 following the command of Urban IV to Nicolas da Fossa, bishop of Chieti, in 1263,¹¹ and received further confirmation of their status as a self-governing Benedictine congregation on 22 March 1275 from Gregory X.¹² They expanded rapidly in Italy, comprising thirty-five communities by 1300, both through new foundations and the reform of existing Benedictine houses.¹³ Peter's growing fame as an ascetic and healer led to his election as pope on 5 July 1294. A familiar name at the Curia by this point, he was chosen as a compromise candidate to break nearly two years of factional deadlock in the conclave. While he had misgivings over leaving his seclusion – he was once again living as a hermit, this time on Mount Morrone – to take up the papacy, he was eventually persuaded by a delegation led by the Angevin ruler of Naples, King Charles II and his son, Charles Martel, who escorted him to Aquila (now L'Aquila) where he was consecrated Celestine V (29 August 1294) in the monastery of Santa-Maria di Collemaggio that he had founded. His papacy was subject to a strong Angevin influence: he appointed seven French cardinals. His tenure would prove to be very short, however. Four months after his consecration, he abdicated (13 December 1294), removing himself from authority just as he had earlier stepped down from the leadership of his own order. He was willingly assisted in his resignation – a first in the history of the popes – by the canonist Cardinal Benedetto Caetani, who became his successor, Boniface VIII.¹⁴ Nevertheless, his brief reign brought valuable privileges to his order, including indulgences for those who visited Celestine houses,¹⁵ and exemption from paying tithes on their

8 *Die ältesten Viten*, 91–100.

9 Herde, *Cölestin V*, 7–8; Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 19.

10 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 13–14.

11 *Ibid.*, 20.

12 Bull of Gregory X (*Religiosam vitam*, 22 March 1275): Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 375–7.

13 *Ibid.*, 354–5.

14 Herde, *Cölestin V*, 31–142.

15 L. Beurrier, *Histoire du monastère et couvent des Pères Célestins de Paris* (Paris, 1634), 105–7.

lands and from episcopal jurisdiction.¹⁶ Additionally, the congregation became known as the Celestines from the 1340s, in remembrance of Peter's papal title.¹⁷

The expansion of the Italian Celestines continued through the fourteenth century, so that they possessed around 100 houses by 1400, although it is clear that it had begun to slow by the turn of the fifteenth.¹⁸ The congregation in France would always be far smaller; nevertheless, the French province was growing rapidly at around the same time that Italian expansion was beginning to slow down, and this time solely through new foundations. The congregation had been introduced there in 1300 by Philip the Fair, against the background of that king's conflict with Peter's papal successor, Boniface VIII. Their early fourteenth-century expansion was limited. Between 1300 and 1350, only four monasteries were founded: Notre-Dame at Ambert, near Orléans (1300–4, by Philip the Fair), Saint-Pierre at Mont-de-Châtres (1309, by the same), Sainte-Croix at Offémont (1331, by Jean de Nesles, lord of Offémont) and Notre-Dame at Ternes (1338, by Roger le Fort, bishop of Limoges), the latter three all being very modest houses at foundation.¹⁹ However, in the century that followed, the congregation went from strength to strength. Thirteen new houses were built between 1350 and 1450 within France, the papal *comtat* of Venaissin, and the duchy of Lorraine (see Appendix 1), beginning with that of Paris in 1352 (founded by Garnier Marcel and the College of the Notaries and Secretaries of the King). This Paris house, dedicated to Notre-Dame de l'Annonciation, became the mother house of the French province, with Charles V and his son Louis, duke of Orléans (d.1407), its most generous backers. It grew from a convent of roughly four to six monks just after foundation to one of thirty to forty monks (and eight or nine oblates) in 1414, and that at a time of regional economic instability. Backed by a cast of powerful founders and benefactors, also including Charles VI, Charles VII, John, duke of Bedford (as regent of France for the Lancastrian Henry VI), and the Avignonese pope Clement VII, the turn of the fifteenth century arguably marked the peak of royal and aristocratic

16 Bull of Celestine V (*Etsi cunctos*, 27 September 1294); Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 377–84. This privilege also sets out the congregational government of the order (discussed in Chapter 2, 85) and lists its possessions.

17 Pellegrini, 'Dall'Ordo Morronensium all'Ordo Celestinorum', 338.

18 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 355.

19 Ambert was founded for twelve monks; Mont-de-Châtres had six; Offémont had four; Ternes had six to eight, despite being founded for twelve. See Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 70–5, 263; Paris, BA, MS 5145 (*Histoire abrégée de la congrégation des Célestins de France*, anonymous, 18th century), 80.

interest.²⁰ Apart from the mother house at Paris, the very well-supported monastery of Saint-Pierre Célestin in Avignon (1393–5), which perhaps reached a similar size, and the houses of Amiens (1392), Lyon (1407–21) and Marcoussis (1404–08) probably represented their largest convents, all of which were founded around that time.²¹

Concurrent with this peak, the Celestines of France found both independence and independent influence. On 25 January 1380, following the outbreak of the Great Schism (1378–1417) and with the support of Charles V, the growing French congregation was granted self-government by Clement VII, the French-backed papal claimant whose election had caused the Schism. From that point onwards, the French Celestines were governed by their own provincial chapter at Paris, which elected a new provincial prior every three years.²² This self-governing status, which included the right to make their own constitutions, was maintained after the end of the Schism in 1417, despite the initial attempts of the Italian abbot to send his visitor to restore the French province to the control of the Italian general chapter. A concordat with their Italian brethren (September 1418) secured French Celestine self-government in return for a contribution of 20 ducats at every Italian general chapter and the presence of the provincial prior at the same every six years, relaxed to every twelve in 1423.²³ This continuing arrangement was confirmed by Martin V on 27 September 1423.²⁴ Crucially, however, the French Celestines came to see themselves as the reform wing of their own order: they proclaimed themselves the strictest proponents of ‘regular observance’ (*observantia regularis*) within the congregation and proactively sought to gain a measure of supremacy over the Italian general chapter, winning the support of the Curia to do so.²⁵ It was to the care of French province that the papacy would attach several Italian Celestine monasteries for the purposes of reform: Eugenius IV granted them control

20 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 76–93. See Chapter 4, 181–2, 191, on the size of the Paris convent and on benefaction.

21 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 264; Avignon was founded for twelve monks, but sixteen more brothers were added up to c.1450 (see Chapter 4, 186); the convent may have totalled thirty to forty monks in good times.

22 Bull of Clement VII (*Sacre vestre religionis observantia*, 25 January 1380): Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 412–14; see Chapter 2, 65–7.

23 Concordat (2 September 1417): Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 414–17; on the relaxation of visits to the general chapter, see Paris, BA, MS 5145, 439–43.

24 Bull of Martin V (*Regimini universalis ecclesie*, 27 September 1423): Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 417–19.

25 See Chapter 1, 61, on Jean Bassand’s proactive efforts to influence Martin V and Eugenius IV to hand over the monastery of Aquila to the French province.

of the houses of Santa-Maria di Collemaggio near Aquila – where St Peter Celestine was buried – and Sant'Eusebio in Rome in 1444, and Innocent VIII did the same with that of Norcia in 1488.²⁶ The French Celestines also exerted significant influence over a wider attempt to reform the Italian congregation: in 1453, the former prior of Mantes, Jean Bertauld (1413–1473) was elected (with the backing of Nicolas V) as abbot-general of the entire congregation following a general chapter held at the French-run monastery of Santa-Maria di Collemaggio.²⁷ The French Celestines would also gain the allegiance of Emperor Charles IV's Celestine foundation of Oybin in Bohemia from 1426, much to the consternation of the Italian brethren.²⁸

By the point of their independence, the French monks had taken on a character somewhat distinct from the Italian Celestines. They were certainly rather more urban and more privileged than their Italian brothers, as Borchardt has noted. Their houses were more often found in or in close proximity to towns and cities, and the monks appear to have maintained closer ties to the powerful princes, aristocrats, and ecclesiastical magnates who provided them with so much funding.²⁹ Where clues to their origin survive, their monks do not, however, appear to be the lesser offspring of great noble or ecclesiastical lineages, although the important exception of Robert de Bordes (d.1384, provincial prior in 1360–3, 1367–70 and 1383–4), a nephew of Cardinal Pierre Bertrand, founder of the house at Colombier, should be noted.³⁰ Rather, men of emergent, bourgeois backgrounds seem to have been particularly prominent. The most notable French Celestines in this study, Pierre Pocquet (d.1408) and Jean Bassand (d.1445), were respectively a lawyer *in utroque iure* who had frequently appeared before the Parlement of Paris,³¹ and the son of an important citizen in Besançon who had left an Augustinian house to join the Celestines.³² Two of the younger brothers of

26 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 132–7, 140–1.

27 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 138; J. Aurélien, *La vie admirable de notre pere Saint Pierre Celestin Pape* (Bar-le Duc, 1873), 327–8.

28 A. Becquet, *Gallicae Coelestinorum Congregationis, Ordinis S. Benedicti, monasteriorum fundationes virorumque vita aut scriptis illustrium elogia historica* (Paris, 1719), 65–8, 73; Paris, BA, MS 5145, 313–7; Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 125–43.

29 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 284–5.

30 Avignon, BM, MS 1439 (Nicolas de la Ville, *Vitae provinciales et priorum congregationis Celestinorum provincie Gallice*, 1653), 206–7; see also Aurélien, *La vie admirable*, 319, and Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 284.

31 O. Caudron, 'Poquet (Pocquet, Pierre), Célestin, V. 1340–1408', in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, ed. M. Viller *et al.*, 17 vols (Paris, 1937–95), xii, 1922–6, at 1922; Avignon, BM, MS 1439, 200–1; Aurélien, *La vie admirable*, 320.

32 See the analysis of his *vita* in the next chapter; Aurélien, *La vie admirable*, 322–3.

the noted theologian and Church reformer Jean Gerson – Nicolas (professed at Villeneuve-lez-Soissons in 1401) and Jean the Celestine (professed at Limay-lez-Mantes in 1407) – were likewise prominent members of the order.³³ A similar background and pattern can be seen in the case of the aforementioned Jean Bertauld. Born to a bourgeois family in the city of Amiens, he had received an education (it is not known to what level) at the University of Paris before going on to join the Celestines: he became prior of Sainte-Trinité in Mantes (1444–53), then Santa Maria di Collemaggio (1453), before his elevation as abbot-general in Italy in the same year. Four of his brothers also joined the Celestine order, two of them also becoming priors.³⁴ Mirielle Chazan's prosopographic research on the monks of Metz, based on the chronicle kept there in this period, has found that at least 15 of the 103 professions between 1376 and 1469 arrived from existing ecclesiastical careers, while at least 5 or 6 had completed a university education.³⁵ In short, they could attract young men with options. Professor Borchardt emphasizes that they did especially well among men who could easily have taken advantage of the expanding opportunities for bureaucratic careers.³⁶

The Celestines lived on in both Italy (until 1810) and France (until 1790), but their late medieval expansion ground to a halt in the late fifteenth century. In the French province, there would only be six further houses added to the province between 1450 and dissolution: Villarsalet, in the duchy of Savoy (1470), Milan (1515, by Francis I of France during his invasion of Italy), Annecy, again in Savoy (1516), Heverle in Belgium (1525), Esclimonte (1546, in the Beauce country) and Bordeaux (1631).³⁷ While that history is doubtless not without interest, it is the French Celestines in their most energetic and best-supported state, between c.1350 and 1450, that this book addresses. In part, it aims to complement the work of Karl Borchardt's excellent and wide-ranging history of the Celestines by focusing on a period and a region that deserve more in-depth study. While Peter Herde's work on St Peter Celestine and that of an active community of Italy historians have shone further light on the early period of Celestine history, their expansion in France and the reformist aspirations of the monks there have not received the same level of interest. While the outlines of French Celestine institutional history

33 Ibid., 326; Avignon, BM, MS 1439, 159. The youngest, Jean the Celestine, was made prior of Marcoussis (in 1415), Lyon (in 1421 and 1432) and Vichy (in 1427).

34 Gadby, 'Les Célestins en France', 267–9.

35 Chazan, 'Le couvent des Célestins de Metz'.

36 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 284.

37 Becquet, *Gallicae Coelestinorum*, 72, 74, 76, 77, 79, 81. On the dissolution of the Celestines, see Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 345–51.

are clear, there is far more depth to uncover regarding their culture, their legislative standards, how they lived out their religious lives together, what they read and what they wrote. But this study's focus is far from just internal, and it aims to do more than just add colour to our historical knowledge of the Celestines. Above all, it seeks to explore how late medieval monastic reform both drew from and shaped its sociocultural landscape.

Later medieval monasticism and reform

Against what contexts should French Celestine reform be understood? One is that of monastic reform, for their reformist bent was far from exceptional in the period. Many traditional views of late medieval monasticism have emphasized 'decline', a widespread weakening of discipline and zeal for reform that left monastic institutions ripe targets for Protestant attacks.³⁸ More recently, historians have suggested that the relevance of monasticism to society declined, especially in the face of growing lay piety.³⁹ These views are under increasing challenge however. A number of so-called 'Observant' reform movements in the late Middle Ages have been brought back into focus by Kaspar Elm and his students,⁴⁰ and most recently by James Mixson and Bert Roest.⁴¹ Such work has self-consciously set about to escape what Mixson describes as 'the deeply rooted traditions and stereotypes [that] once distorted our approaches to the religious history of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', in particular the 'the looming shadow of a seemingly

38 A view that has been broadly upheld in the classic English general studies of monastic history: G.G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, 4 vols (Cambridge, 1950), and D. Knowles, *Christian Monasticism* (London, 1969). P. Schmitz, *Histoire de l'ordre de Saint-Benoît*, 7 vols (Paris, 1942–56), iii, takes a similar view, but is more circumspect about the generality of ascetic decay.

39 H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism* (New York, 1984), 224. See also A. Vauchez, 'The Religious Orders', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. v: c.1198–c.1300, ed. D. Abulafia (Cambridge, 1999), 220–55. F. Rapp's discussion of religious developments in this period barely mentions religious orders. See F. Rapp, 'Religious Belief and Practice', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. vii: c.1415–c.1500, ed. C.T. Allmand (Cambridge, 1998), 203–19.

40 See especially: K. Elm, 'Verfall und Erneuerung des Spätmittelalterlichen Ordenswesens: Forschungen und Forschungsaufgaben', in *Untersuchungen zu Kloster und Stift*, ed. J. Fleckenstein (Göttingen, 1980), 189–238; K. Elm, 'Les ordres monastiques, canoniaux et militaires en Europe du Centre-Est au bas Moyen Âge', in *L'Église et le peuple chrétien dans les pays de l'Europe du Centre-Est et du Nord (XIV^e–XV^e siècles)* (Rome, 1990), 165–86.

41 J. Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors: ownership and mortal sin at the origins of the Observant movement* (Leiden, 2009); B. Roest, *Order and Disorder: the Poor Clares between foundation and reform* (Leiden, 2013); *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*, ed. J. Mixson and B. Roest (Leiden, 2015).

inevitable Reformation.⁴² The 'Observant' label derives from the favoured maxim of late medieval monastic reformers: 'regular observance (*observantia regularis*)', the same banner which the French Celestines took up in this period. That maxim itself was hardly new and in and of itself would appear to denote little more than having or following a particular rule. Nevertheless, its use became more loaded with reformist significance in the late Middle Ages. In the Franciscan order from the mid-fourteenth century onward, it denoted the belief in the stricter, literal observance of the Rule in contrast to the more moderated observance followed by the wider order (described as 'conventuals').⁴³ The use of 'regular observance' and 'Observant' as bywords for monastic reform and reformers soon became common in other orders, and not only among the Franciscan's mendicant rivals (Dominicans and Austin Friars). From the late fourteenth century and onwards into the fifteenth, Observants sprang forth with no less energy in the most ancient form of coenobitic monasticism then in existence, that to which the Celestines themselves belonged, the Benedictines. The Observant Benedictine congregations of Subiaco (c.1370), Castl (1380), Santa Giustina (1407), Melk (1418) and Bursfelde (1433) all reformed houses at a pace: Santa Giustina added twenty-nine in just sixty years, while the Bursfelde congregation contained at least ninety-four houses in Central Europe by 1530.⁴⁴

Recent research into Observant reform has recognized the multifaceted character of these groups and the results naturally present no small variety: how far one can speak of an 'Observant' movement across so many orders remains an open question. Nevertheless, certain traits appear common. A world has been uncovered where reformers built on the legacy of monastic piety of the Cistercian age as well as the 'apostolic poverty' promotion of the thirteenth century,⁴⁵ but also adopted new manners. If ascetic effort had long been a monastic hallmark, the Observants demanded unusual levels of precision and conformity in this respect, girding themselves with an outlook on the written codes of monastic life – Rules, but also supplementary legislation (e.g. customs, statutes, constitutions) – that urged great practical

42 J. Mixson, 'Introduction', in *Companion to Observant Reform*, ed. Mixson and Roest, 1–20, at 1.

43 D. Nimmo, 'The Genesis of the Observance', in *Il rinnovamento del francescanesimo: l'Osservanza; atti dell'XI Convegno Internazionale*, 1983 (Perugia, 1984), 109–47.

44 G. Melville, *The World of Medieval Monasticism: its history and forms of life*, trans. J. Mixson (Collegeville, 2016), 306–10; B. Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars and the Reformation: the congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua* (Oxford, 1985), 5.

45 On 'apostolic poverty', see H. Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*, trans. R.E. Lerner (Notre Dame, 1995).

caution, especially over issues of property and poverty, and admitted to little variation.⁴⁶ They developed the ideals of monastic community by way of their thoroughgoing attack on greed and pride. Of particular importance among the Benedictines were congregational chapter systems that allowed for the alignment of practice across monasteries and the oversight of abbots. While this practice had originated with the Cistercians and been copied by the Cluniacs at the turn of the thirteenth century,⁴⁷ and had technically been made mandatory for Black Monks by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and the papal bull *Summi magistri* (1336), Observant reform was critical in bringing it to fruition among previously unreformed Benedictines, since outside of England, obedience to these demands had been occasional at best.⁴⁸ Some Observants went further than simply breathing new life into this model. The Observant Benedictines of Santa Giustina went far beyond moderating the role of abbots and the independence of convents through collegial oversight, as per the Cistercian model, and developed a system that was closer to the Franciscan and Carthusian models, where superiors were centrally appointed.⁴⁹ Monks there made their vows to the congregation, not the abbots of their houses; those abbots were in turn enjoined to renounce their offices yearly, and be replaced by a chapter president elected every year by the abbots and convent representatives gathered there.⁵⁰ As will be seen in Chapter 2, the Celestines had earlier concocted a system which, in Benedictine terms at least, was no less radical.

What inspired this new wave of Observant reform? Disciplinary issues within orders cannot be – and have not been – ignored. Within many Benedictine houses, as James Mixson has revealed, there was a culture of little luxuries, of exemptions for the possession of personal property, that had crept into communities. Given that this was a clear contravention of the Rule of St Benedict, it is no surprise that some within their communities would find fault in this and that there was conflict between the *observantes* – those who stuck steadfast to the Rule in this regard – and the *conventuales* – those

46 Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors*, 205–12; J. Mixson, 'Observant Reform's Conceptual Frameworks between Principle and Practice', in *Companion to Observant Reform*, ed. Mixson and Roest, 60–84, at 75–7.

47 Melville, *World of Medieval Monasticism*, 148–51, 167–8; for an in-depth study of the Cistercian and Cluniac general chapters, see F. Cygler, *Das Generalkapitel im hohen Mittelalter, Cisterzienser, Prämonstratenser, Kartäuser und Cluniazenser* (Münster, 2002), 23–118.

48 J.G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2011), 289–94.

49 Melville, *World of Medieval Monasticism*, 164–5, 214–15; see Cygler, *Das Generalkapitel*, 214–313, for a detailed study of the Carthusian system.

50 Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars*, 2–4; T. Leccissotti, *Congregationis S. Iustinae de Padua O.S.B. Ordinationes Capitulorum Generalium* (Montecassino, 1939), xxvi–xlii.

who followed the moderated practices of their communities. This conflict, however, was not one that existed in a vacuum. That the *conventuales* held their personal allowances so dearly reflected a society where access to little luxuries was becoming more widespread, especially in the towns, as standards of living improved in the wake of the Black Death.⁵¹ Most importantly, the Observants were not so much apart from, but a part of late medieval society and culture, despite their undoubtedly earnest and reinvigorated efforts to deny the world. Their attitude towards monastic legislation, as Mixson has commented, is hard not to relate to the rising influence of law and the legal profession in society at large.⁵² They copied texts and extracts in the manner of the Modern Devout.⁵³ And while they saw themselves as traditionalists, they often flourished in close proximity to humanist circles, which were not without respect for the idealism of monastic seclusion.⁵⁴ Their membership and supporters also suggest their place within a specifically late medieval social context. Much like those of the French Celestines, their leaders were frequently drawn from the ranks of the upwardly mobile, educated middle classes who began to prosper in these centuries, and whose depth of pious interests would also flourish outside the cloister. They had support networks that included not only ecclesiastical and lay magnates but also the intellectuals and Church reformers who were finding audiences beyond the schools, and the same bourgeois society they had so much success in recruiting from.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the image of the Observants within society still feels somewhat uncertain. On the one hand they seem to represent a coherent 'religious option' within late medieval society, as contextually appealing as many paths of lay pious expression.⁵⁶ On the other hand, we still draw lines between this option and others: Observant religion has been presented as having something of an opposing, competitive relationship with lay piety,⁵⁷ while the history of conflict within cloisters enjoys pride of place as a shaper of specifically Observant values

51 Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors*, 48–64.

52 Mixson, 'Observant Reform's Conceptual Frameworks', 66.

53 Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors*, 178–90.

54 G. Zarri, 'Ecclesiastical Institutions and Religious Life in the Observant Century', in *Companion to Observant Reform*, ed. Mixson and Roest, 23–59, at 37–9.

55 Mixson, 'Introduction', 9.

56 J. Van Engen, 'Multiple Options: the world of the fifteenth century Church', *Church History*, 77 (2008), 257–84.

57 Mixson, 'Observant Reform's Conceptual Frameworks', 67; B. Roest, 'Observant Reform in Religious Orders', in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, iv, ed. M. Rubin and W. Simons (Cambridge, 2009), 457.

in Mixson's analysis.⁵⁸ Given the spectacular rise of Observant reform in this period, a rise that could only have taken place with significant external support, there is surely greater depth and nuance to be uncovered concerning the ongoing conversation between monastic reform and external society that occurred in this period.

To think of the interaction between monastic reform and society as a 'conversation' encourages us to continue the work of recent research in mapping the ties of Observant reformers to the deep-lying cultural and social trends of the late medieval West: this book will cover those areas in depth in the Celestine context. But it also forces us to think of monastic reform in the context of the events and affairs of the society that surrounded them, and the world of shifting perceptions that brought underlying trends to life for contemporaries. This brings us to another historiographical problem. Traditional discussions of late medieval religious culture have focused heavily on 'crisis'; to discuss Observant reform in relation to events such as bubonic plague, the Great Western Schism (1378–1417) and political conflicts might seem to draw one back to that focus, as James Mixson has commented.⁵⁹ But to understand the relationship of Observant reform with the world, it is necessary to view these contexts through the eyes of the time, rather than through the lens of teleological ideas of religious transition.

From the perspective of contemporary perception, some oft-cited late medieval 'crisis' factors seem less decisive, such as the endemic bouts of pestilence that followed the Black Death (1346–53). There is no doubt that these had immense socio-economic impact, and it is well known that monasteries were often very badly disrupted by mass mortalities and falling returns from their patrimonies due to depopulation; fundamentally, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, demographic collapse had an enormous effect on the economic grounding of monastic life. But the evidence regarding the impact of mass mortality on the religious mood and tastes of the period is more ambivalent. While it has been argued that recurrent bouts of plague engendered a fearful, morbid religious atmosphere that affected the intensity of lay pious practice,⁶⁰ others have been more sceptical as to any revolutionary impact in this regard. For instance, Jacques Chiffolleau's study of religious culture surrounding death in the Avignon region in the late Middle Ages finds that the practices he uncovered (e.g. wills that commanded elaborate

58 See J. Mixson, 'The Poor Monk and the Proprietors: Observant reform of community as conflict', *Saeculum*, 66 (2016), 93–110.

59 Mixson, 'Introduction', 15.

60 J. Delumeau, *La peur en Occident* (Paris, 1978), 98–142.

funerals and liturgical commemoration) were more informed by longer-term trends, above all a greater sense of the loss of oneself in death that went back to the twelfth century, rather than by the shock and depression of pestilence mortalities.⁶¹ Despite an apparent alignment of dates – French Celestine growth accelerated from c.1350 –, the evidence examined in this book likewise offers no suggestion that bubonic plague had a defining impact on how the monks and society perceived each other. Other dramatic events, however, do appear to have had a spiritual significance for the educated, urban culture that surrounded Observant reformers, including the French Celestines.

The Great Western Schism (1378–1417) had perhaps the most pointed effect in this regard. The historical background to the Schism was altogether mundane. The papal court of Gregory XI returned from Avignon (where it had resided since 1309) in 1377, much to the consternation of Charles V, king of France. Following the death of Gregory XI on 27 March 1378, Bartolomeo Prignano, formerly the archbishop of Bari, was elected as Urban VI on 8 April. Unhappy with the decision and with Urban's autocratic outlook, however, a dissident group of French cardinals rejected the election of Urban VI, citing that the presence of the Roman mob had led to an invalid decision: they elected Robert of Geneva as 'Clement VII' at Forlì (20 September 1378). Failing to gain control of Rome, Clement fled to Avignon, and set up his administration there; he had the backing of France, Navarre, Naples and in time the kingdoms of Aragon, Castile and Scotland, as well as parts of Germany.⁶² For all the politics, however, one should not underestimate the effect that this split exercised upon minds, especially in the continental West, where the dividing lines between the competing papal obediences were most visible. While the collapsing claim of universality could even rear its head in the prophetic visions of the relatively unlettered, the issue caused particular strain within the educated, reformist milieu that Observants appear especially tied to.⁶³ Here access to information and opinion abounded with the distribution of tracts and the rise of certain 'public intellectuals', among whom one might include both Jean Gerson (d.1429) and Pierre d'Ailly (d.1420), both of whom

61 J. Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà* (Paris, 2011), 94, 117. See also P. Aries, *L'homme devant la mort* (Paris, 1977).

62 R.N. Swanson, *Universities, Academics and the Great Schism* (Cambridge, 1979), 5–9.

63 M. Rubin, 'Europe Remade: purity and danger in late medieval Europe', *TRHS*, 11 (2001), 101–24; R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints and Visionaries of the Great Schism, 1378–1417* (University Park, 2006), discusses the examples of a number of female visionaries with little or no formal education, including the French examples of Constance de Rabestan, Ermine de Reims and Marie Robine: the latter was connected with the Celestines (see Chapter 5, 244).

the French Celestines counted among their friends.⁶⁴ In this environment, the challenge raised by the Schism was not merely political, but appeared to attack the very spiritual fabric of Christian society. The predominant path of human salvation and redemption – through the intervention of the clerical order – could seem more suspect, given the presence of competing Church hierarchies.⁶⁵ Pierre d'Ailly seems to have been so deeply concerned about portents of the apocalypse during this time that he looked to the stars and the study of astrology and the prophetic works of Hildegard of Bingen for answers towards what the future might hold.⁶⁶ If the effects were judged on a spiritual as well as temporal plane, it was natural that the primary causes would be found in sin. In an atmosphere where ecclesiastical magnates appeared to have placed ambition over care for the flock, 'pride', 'avarice' and 'lust' began to stalk the scene – and indeed often not in a manner that was confined to one papal court alone – for informed observers such as the former courtiers Eustache Deschamps and Philippe de Mézières, as well as for theologians like Pierre d'Ailly and Nicolas de Clamanges.⁶⁷

France, meanwhile, had been locked in an intermittent struggle over Valois succession since the 1330s that lasted until the end of the Hundred Years War in 1453. On the one hand, such political instabilities and the wars they brought were nothing new. On the other hand, a crisis over monarchy had more religious weight attached to it than ever before, at least among those closest to it. Kingship had taken on increasingly sacramental overtones from the reign of St Louis onward. Philip the Fair's conflict with Boniface VIII – the same conflict that had given the Celestines their entry into France – had resulted in high claims not only for the king's temporal power over the papacy, but also for his own priestly qualities. This did not necessarily result in a population that was religiously devoted to the person of the king. Amid the dynastic confusion and upheaval of the 'hot' periods of the Hundred Years War, pragmatic, everyday interests of safety and security often appear critical to allegiance. On the other hand, expressions of the religious humility and the purity of the royal office were ramped up in line

64 D. Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity before Print* (University Park, 2009); on the relationship of D'Ailly and Gerson with the Celestines, see Chapter 5, 251–60.

65 D.Z. Flanagan, 'Extra ecclesiam salus non est – sed quae ecclesia?: ecclesiology and authority in the later Middle Ages', in *A Companion to the Great Western Schism*, ed. J. Rollo-Koster and T.M. Izbicki (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 333–74, at 333–8.

66 L.A. Smoller, *History, Prophecy, and the Stars: the Christian astrology of Pierre d'Ailly, 1350–1420* (Princeton, 1994).

67 R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'The Conceptualization and Imagery of the Great Schism', in *Companion to the Great Western Schism*, ed. Rollo-Koster and Izbicki, 123–58.

with majestic visions of kingship, especially from the early confusion of Charles V's reign.⁶⁸ If that context, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, provided important grounding for the support the French Celestines received from royals and their functionaries from the 1350s, the confluence of the Schism with the contest and conflict between the followers of the dukes of Orléans and Burgundy for control of royal government during the mental illness of Charles VI (d.1421) created a perfect storm within the wider intellectual and cultural milieu of the monks: a perceived crisis of greed and pride seemed to inhibit any sort of lasting unity. Burgundian propaganda painted Louis, duke of Orléans (d.1407), the brother of Charles VI, as a man who had completely given way to these sins, and who had sown disunity both in the realm and in the Church as a result.⁶⁹ An Orléanist courtier like Christine de Pisan would conversely make every effort to paint him as the opposite, while Jean Gerson begged for greater humility on all sides, extolling the virtues of that simple labouring father, St Joseph, to the warring aristocracy.⁷⁰ That the French-speaking world in this period was quite fertile soil for monastic reform efforts should be set against this background. The Burgundian court made great efforts to support not only the Carthusians, but also the Observant-influenced reform of the Poor Clares by St Colette.⁷¹

In the midst of such perceived 'crises' within the world, crises that informed contemporaries so often related to 'worldly' behaviour, re-emphasizing ascetic – i.e. monastic – values was a natural response. But religious houses were more than just institutions where people sought solace and salvation in trying times: they could also be seen as a resource for the purification and reform of the Church and Christian society. In Prague, the Paris-educated Dominican Mattias of Janov made a novel proposal in 1380, just after the start of the Schism, which was probably addressed to John of Jenstein, the archbishop of the city. Lamenting the state of the clergy and noting, 'just how many devout, chaste, learned and humble men, wise and suited to all manner of good work for the edification of Christ's body and the people of the church are shut away' in the houses of Carthusians, the Benedictines, the Cistercians and the Austin Friars, he called for these religious take up the ecclesiastical duties in which the secular clergy had

68 Guinée, *Un meurtre*, 19–118; J. Krynen, *L'empire du roi* (Paris, 1993); J. Quillet, *Charles V: le roi lettré* (Paris, 1984).

69 Guinée, *Un meurtre*, 170–2.

70 Christine de Pisan, *Le livre des faits et bonnes meurs du sage Roy Charles V*, ed. N. Desgrugillers-Billard (Clermont Ferrand, 2009), 141–2; P. Payan, *Joseph: une image de la paternité* (Paris, 2006), 143–4, 153–5, 184–7.

71 E. Lopez, *Culture et sainteté: Colette de Corbie* (Saint-Étienne, 1994), 447.

failed.⁷² Janov's words attest to the continued and evolving relevance of ascetic separation: it is interesting to observe that he leads with enclosed religious, rather than with men of his own order. But beyond this, his words suggest that monastic institutions represented hope for a Christian society placed back on the road towards a greater perfection. With bad clerics replaced, 'Then you will see how much utility you will confer to the sacred unity of the family of Christ, how great will be the edification of the people believing in the crucified Jesus, and what common illumination of the unrefined and simple peasants will come to pass.'⁷³

Janov's sober optimism was shared by others; so too was his belief in the importance of monasticism to the overall picture of 'reform'. Philip Stump has shown that the Council of Constance (1414–17) was marked by a strong restatement of the medieval Christian idea of reform, inherited from the patristic period: 'the idea of free, intentional and ever perfectible, multiple, prolonged and ever repeated efforts by man to reassert and augment values pre-existent in the spiritual-material compound of the world' as Gerhart Ladner identified it.⁷⁴ A succinct example of this idea of 'reform' is found in the critical conciliar decree *Frequens* (9 October 1417). In demanding that the pope call ecumenical councils at regular intervals, its authors expressed hope in something more than a simple restoration of a past state of affairs: 'The frequent celebration of general councils is the best method of cultivating the field of the Lord. It extirpates the thorns, briars, and thistles of heresies, errors, and schisms; it corrects excesses, reforms the things which are deformed, and brings the Lord's vineyard to the fruits produced by richest fertility. The remembrance of times past and the consideration of present things places this before our eyes.'⁷⁵ Monastic reform was an important plank of the Council's work. In early 1417, it summoned the Benedictine 'abbots, priors, and superiors' of the province of Mainz to Petershausen, on the outskirts of Constance, to celebrate a reform chapter, where they would

72 *Mathiae de Janov, dicti Magister Parisiensi Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, 277–8, cited in Rubin, 'Europe Remade', 108, and R.E. Weltsch, *Archbishop John of Jenstein (1348–1400): papalism, humanism and reform in pre-Hussite Prague* (The Hague, 1968), 166–7.

73 Ibid.

74 G.B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: its impact on Christian thought and action in the age of the Fathers* (Cambridge, MA, 1959), 35. On the later Middle Ages, see especially P.H. Stump, *The Reforms of the Council of Constance (1414–1418)* (Leiden, 1994); P.H. Stump, 'The Influence of Gerhart Ladner's *The Idea of Reform*', in *Reform and Renewal in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: studies in honour of Louis Pascoe*, ed. L.B. Pascoe, T.M. Izbicki and C.M. Bellitto (Leiden, 2000), 3–17; C.M. Bellitto, 'The Reform Context of the Great Western Schism', in *Companion to the Great Western Schism*, ed. Rollo-Koster and Izbicki, 302–31.

75 Stump, *Reforms of the Council of Constance*, 157; *COD*³ (1978), 438–9.

be assisted by the ‘many abbots and priors of this order from many regions’ who were already present at the Council. Taking their cue from the ‘healthy statutes’ of the Fourth Lateran Council, Honorius III and Benedict XII that had called for the regular celebration of provincial chapters among the Black Monks, they believed that ‘from the celebration of these [now] deformed chapters, the correction, the reformation of morals, the avoidance of many bad things and the promotion of multiple goods doubtless tend to come about.’⁷⁶ The language here, balancing correction with amelioration, was not dissimilar to *Frequens*, and indeed was issued before the final version of the latter; if it could be read as the conciliar reform spirit being applied to Benedictine monasticism, there is also the sense that these Benedictines were being called to act as a model in miniature for the wider reform those at the Council were still developing.

Late medieval monastic reformers also appear responsive to some of the key paths of correction and reform dear to those engaged in the wider renewal of the Church and Christian society, above all the two that emerge most strongly in the Petershausen bull: the enforcement of legislation of good tradition, and the absolute importance of coming together in unity. In an age where a Church reformer like Cardinal Zabarella could construct a vision of conciliar government solely on the basis of canon law,⁷⁷ and where a Christianized vision of Roman law, as a translation of the virtue of justice, played its part in the sacralization of royal majesty,⁷⁸ that Observant reformers sought religious comfort in conforming their lives to a body of legislation with precision was not only a relatively natural development of monastic tradition, but something that found parallels at the highest levels of external society. If Mixson has commented that strict observance of legislation helped to differentiate monastic life from lay piety, it can also be seen as placing the Observant reformers at the cutting edge of a wider religious culture, indeed of spiritual aspiration: a ‘yearning for law’, as Van Engen has described it, can also be witnessed in the precise exercises of the Modern Devout and even the emphasis of Wyclif and Hus on the *lex dei* of the Bible.⁷⁹ Moreover, the

76 J. Zeller, ‘Das Provinzialkapitel im Stifte Petershausen im Jahre 1417, ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Reformen im Benediktinerorden zur Zeit des Konstanzer Konzils’, *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktinerordens und Seiner Zweige*, 41 (1921/2), 1–71, at 47–8.

77 B. Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory* (Cambridge, 1955), 199–237.

78 J. Krynen, ‘Droit romain et état monarchique’, in *Représentation, pouvoir et royauté*, ed. J. Blanchard (Paris, 1995), 13–23; see also W. Ullman, *The Medieval Idea of Law as Represented by Lucas de Penne* (London, 1946).

79 Mixson, ‘Observant Reform’s Conceptual Frameworks’, 67–74; Van Engen, ‘Multiple Options’, 273.

fact that monastic reformers sought closer, tighter monastic communities and congregations was highly pertinent to the contemporary atmosphere, especially following the arrival of the Schism. Gerson's influential *De unitate ecclesiae* (1409), written at the time of the Council of Pisa – the first conciliar attempt to heal the Schism – argued that 'the essential unity of the Church always remains in Christ, her bridegroom, for He is the head of the Church in which we are all one', and that the members of the Church – not only cardinals, but princes and indeed any Christian – could and should act to preserve and enhance that unity.⁸⁰ The striving for more perfect community could itself be divisive. Recent literature has not incorrectly emphasized the divisions that the Observants' rigorous vision of common life caused, while the conciliar government of the Church pronounced at Constance at the end of the Schism would fall apart in the 1430s and 1440s through the internecine conflicts of the Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence (1431–49) and a reinvigorated papacy that itself espoused reform. Nevertheless, ideas concerning unity and common action were a powerful reformist thread throughout the period.

The French Celestines in the late Middle Ages provide an excellent case study in which to understand the conversation between Observant reform and society. Although this study examines both aspects – internal religious culture and external context – it seeks above all to analyse the connections and interactions that took place between the two. Part I opens with an analysis of the *Vita* of Jean Bassand (Chapter 1), which exemplifies many aspects of French Celestine ideology and practice at the height of their influence in the fifteenth century; Chapter 2 discusses the development of their constitutions, the highly physical and action-orientated notion of justification and the reformist hope in law on which they were built, and the interaction with external society and culture – both excluding the world and borrowing from it – which informed them; and Chapter 3 examines the extent to which the French Celestines were able to maintain their rigorous Benedictine asceticism in practice, and their attempts to avoid the excesses associated with 'regular observance'. These led to profound reflection on the quandaries of reformed monastic life, which drew deeply on contemporary spiritual and reformist currents, above all the thought of Jean Gerson, but also showed significant creativity. Part II focuses on the monks' sociocultural context, and how they positioned themselves within the world. Chapter 4 looks at the benefactions and benefactors of the congregation, drawing attention to the difficulties that weighed against founding new monasteries

80 Jean Gerson, 'De unitate ecclesie', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. P. Glorieux, 10 vols (Paris, 1960–73), vi (1965), no. 272, 136–45, at 137.

in this period and the Celestines' surprising growth within this context; Chapter 5 focuses on the symbolic significance acquired by the congregation in a cultural milieu that was not only troubled by the twin threats of war and ecclesiastical schism but also animated by ambitions for the reform of Christian cultural milieu. It also examines the range of the Celestines' interpersonal and ideological influence and the extent to which the monks were able to offer solutions for problems confronting the wider society, in the context of French political divisions and the Great Western Schism. More particularly, the impact of their own thought on reformers outside their walls, especially Jean Gerson, is reconsidered.

Part I

The French Celestines in their world

1. The *Vita* of Jean Bassand (c.1360–1445)

One of the essential sources for understanding late medieval French Celestine culture is the *Vita* of Jean Bassand, written in the mid-fifteenth century by an anonymous Celestine monk.¹ Its subject was the most important figure in the French Celestine congregation in the period under study, even eclipsing his mentor, Pierre Pocquet, who had been the first provincial prior of the independent French province in 1380 (see Appendix 1). Jean Bassand was elected provincial prior on five occasions, one more than Pocquet,² and unlike Pocquet, he was promoted as a saint in the order. His *Vita* thus suggests much about the ideal, if not necessarily the real, standard of Celestine life. Beyond that, its author took time to reflect on the meaning of their reform – by way of Bassand's example – in the context of the events, concerns and aspirations of the Christian society that surrounded them.

Provenance and purpose

The text was edited by the Bollandists in the early eighteenth century from four manuscripts, only one of which is now known in French public libraries.³ The earliest seems to have been a now lost codex found at the Celestine monastery of Paris: the Bollandists used this as their primary witness. The existence of one or possibly two further lost Celestine copies can be deduced from other evidence. Ménard's summary of Bassand's life, based on copies of the *Vita* in Paris and Amiens, proves that there was a further manuscript at the latter house.⁴ The eighteenth-century catalogue of the libraries of the French Celestine congregation only mentions one copy, at Paris, but this codex appears to have been different from the one collated by the Bollandists at around the same time.⁵ There is, however,

1 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', in AASS 38 (Aug. V), 870–90.

2 He was elected in 1411, 1417, 1426, 1432 and 1438, each time for a three-year term. See Appendix 1.

3 See 'Commentarius Praevius', in 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 875. A 16th-century copy from the collection of Jacques-Jules Chifflet, a 17th-century antiquary from Besançon, Bassand's birthplace, is the sole copy used by the Bollandists that survives: Besançon, Collection Chifflet MS 12, fols 160r–191r. The Bollandists collated three other manuscripts that are now lost, one belonging to Chifflet, another owned by another antiquary, and another that belonged to the Celestines of Paris.

4 Nicolas Hugues Ménard, *Martyrologium sanctorum ordinis Divi Benedicti* (Paris, 1629), 676.

5 Paris, BnF, MS fr. 15290 (Louis François Daire, former prior of the Metz Celestines, *Catalogue raisonné des Manuscrits déposés dans les Bibliothèques de la Congrégation des Célestins de*

another late medieval witness that the Bollandists were unaware of, a manuscript that originally belonged to the Celestines of Avignon.⁶ This presents a very similar text to the edited version, with only minor textual variants, albeit that it excludes the final chapter of post-mortem miracles (c.9) included by the Bollandists. Its mid-fifteenth-century hand allows the text to be firmly dated to the decades immediately following Bassand's death. In all probability, the main body – his life and miracles immediately after death – were written even closer to his passing than that. A second fifteenth-century hand begins adding in a miracle that occurred at the opening of his casket eighteen years later (1463). The material added by the second hand presumably came from another exemplar, possibly the lost Paris MS: it follows the same course as the Bollandist text, but the scribe appears to have abandoned the transcription midway through recounting the aforesaid incident.⁷ The preceding body of the Avignon edition thus probably represents an early version of the *Vita* written before 1463.

The author provides some description of himself in the prologue. He states that he had known Bassand personally and had now taken up the pen in order 'to describe such things in the present little book, which were not only seen, but heard from reliable report about the most holy father Jean Bassand.' He also tells us something of his own position in the congregation: 'Although unworthy, I was [Bassand's] third successor in the regimen of regular observance in Italy under the Reverend Provincial of France.'⁸ The last part of the sentence refers to Bassand's tenure leading the reform of the Italian Celestine monasteries of Santa-Maria di Collemaggio, near Aquila, and Sant' Eusebio of Rome, both of which had been given to the independent French province in 1444 by Eugenius IV. Bassand was described as 'vicar-general' in the associated papal document, essentially the provincial prior's principal agent.⁹ Bassand died 'around a year later' (1445) in Aquila, as the

France), 262. This volume (in fol. C. 31) also contained a *vita* of St Peter Celestine, whereas the copy found by the Bollandists at the same house was bound with the *vita* of Roberto da Salle, an early Italian Celestine.

6 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 5620, fols 2r–16r: there is an *ex libris* on fol. 2 ('fratrum Celestinorum de Avinone') in a 15th-century hand. The copy had found its way into royal collections prior to the suppression of the Celestines during the Revolutionary era: the Bollandists may have missed it for this reason. The *Acta Sanctorum* edited text is cited here, along with any textual variants found in the Avignon MS.

7 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 5620, fol. 15r–v; 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 891.

8 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 876.

9 Confirmation of Eugenius IV (6 March 1444, *Iniunctum nobis*): Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 419–21; Avignon, BM, MS 728 (constitutions of c.1420), fol. 17r, states that a newly elected provincial could appoint a 'vicar or visitor' at his discretion.

Vita notes.¹⁰ Given that the standard length of tenure for Celestine offices was three years, if the author was or had been his third successor – whether as ‘vicar general’, as a specific vicar for Italy, or perhaps as prior of Santa Maria di Collemaggio – his stay in Italy would most probably have occurred in the 1450s.¹¹

The nineteenth-century Celestine antiquary Aurélien identifies the author with Pierre Castaing (professed at Avignon in 1428, d.1470), stating that he was this ‘third successor’. Castaing was certainly favoured by Bassand, who appointed him prior of Avignon for the first time in 1438, and his long association with that house (he was prior a further three times in 1444–7, 1450–3, 1462–70) coincides with the likely dating of the Avignon MS. Nevertheless, the fact that between 1444 and 1462 he is cited as prior either there or at Gentilly (1456–62), or provincial prior (1447–50, 1453–6), casts significant doubt on Aurélien’s claim that he took up a leadership role in Italy.¹² While precise lists of the French Celestine authorities in Italy are not forthcoming, Italian antiquarian records make no mention of his presence at all.¹³ Additionally, Bassand’s own time in Avignon (prior 1420–3 and 1432–5) is hardly mentioned in the *Vita*.¹⁴ Might the author have been an Italian supporter? Matteo Pizzulo d’Aquila, a professor of theology, for instance, is described as having been both prior of Santa Maria di Collemaggio and a vicar-general in 1454 and 1455.¹⁵ The level of detail about Bassand’s work in northern France, however, makes this implausible. There is some knowledge of the geography of the Île-de-France, the author correctly stating the distance by river between Paris and Mantes as ‘almost thirty miles’,¹⁶ and a recognition of the emerging northern French and Burgundian cult of St Colette, the contemporary reformer of the Poor Clares, who is described

10 ‘Vita Joannis Bassandi’, 884: ‘anno uno circiter praefuisset’; Paris, BnF, MS lat. 5620, fol. 11v: ‘anno circiter fuisset’.

11 Regrettably, despite the existence of very complete lists of provincial priors for the interior French Celestine houses in antiquarian collections of the 17th and 18th centuries (Paris, BA, MS 5145; Avignon, BM, MS 1439), none have been found for congregational vicars-general, vicars in Italy or priors of L’Aquila.

12 Aurélien, *La vie admirable*, 327; Avignon, BM, MS 1439, 190.

13 Ludovico Zanotti, *Regesti Celestini*, ed. F. Avagliano and W. Capezzali, 6 vols (L’Aquila, 1994–9), the most complete Italian Celestine documentary compilation, written in the 17th century, makes no mention of Castaing at L’Aquila.

14 Avignon, BM, MS 1439, 145–7; ‘Vita Joannis Bassandi’, 888, 890, records two miracles in Avignon, one concerning a noble lady, the other a certain Pierre, a subprior there. It is tempting to believe this latter might be Pierre Castaing, but the author does not identify him as such.

15 Zanotti, *Regesti*, vi.2, 691–2.

16 ‘Vita Joannis Bassandi’, 882.

as having received knowledge of Bassand's death by revelation. Bassand had apparently acted as an adviser to her while she was still a Beguine and he was prior of Amiens.¹⁷ A more likely candidate is the noted Celestine writer, Jean Bertauld. In 1453, he was appointed prior of Santa Maria di Collemaggio, shortly before being elected as abbot-general of the entire order in the same year. Before that, he was prior of Mantes from 1444, and was born in Amiens.¹⁸ It is also known that Bertauld attended the University of Paris, although it is not known what he studied, which is fitting with the level of arts education shown by the author: the writer was able to cite Cicero¹⁹ and Seneca²⁰ correctly in his descriptions of Bassand.

Whatever the exact answer to these questions, these clues make clear that the *Vita* is probably a product of the 1450s and was almost certainly written by a native French Celestine. The initial audience also seems to have been primarily on the French side of the Alps, given what is known of the manuscript tradition. It was probably written at the request of the French provincial authorities: the prologue describes how the author had taken up the work having been 'stirred by certain more venerable brothers of our order'.²¹ How hard they ever pressed the case for canonization is unknown: there is no record of a papal process. The text nevertheless included in-life and post-mortem miracles as if to support such an application: the lost Paris MS also contained an antiphon and other chants for liturgical commemoration.²² Beyond the Celestine manuscripts that have been noted, there is evidence of an active cult within the order running into the sixteenth century. The epitaph found at the end of three of the four exemplars used by the Bollandist editor – although not in the Avignonese manuscript – is found again in the biographic treatment given to Bassand by the Celestine Claude Firmin (professed 1539 at Paris) in his *Vitae patrum ordinis Celestinatorum*. That account repeats many of the same anecdotes as the earlier

17 Ibid., 886–7; on Colette, see Lopez, *Culture et sainteté*.

18 Gadby, 'Les Célestins en France', 267–9.

19 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 877: 'perpetuam mentis et corporis servavit castitatem, et factus adolescens bone indolis, verecundiam preferre modestia, a qua, juxta Tullium Ciceronem, prima commendatio adolescentum proficiscitur'; Cicero, *De officiis*, ii.13. 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 882: 'fortis siquidem et constantis animi est, ut ait Tullius, in rebus adversis non turbari et asperis'; Cicero, *De officiis*, i.23.

20 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 879: 'ut ait de Socrate Cordubensis, totam philosophiam suam revocavit ad mores'; Seneca, *Epistles*, lxxi. He also cited Lucanus ('Vita Joannis Bassandi', 878), Cassiodorus (879), Celsus (880) and Seneca again (881), but the quotes appear misattributed, and are of unknown origin.

21 Ibid., 876.

22 'Commentarius Praevius' in 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 871.

Vita.²³ Another metrical epitaph of Bassand can be found tucked away in an early sixteenth-century codex.²⁴ There may have been many more signs of his cult lost during the break-up of Celestine archives and libraries in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Outside the congregation, we know less of his cult's impact, but there are some important signs. The author of the *Vita* claims the devotion of the people of Aquila and its environs both at his death and subsequently: Giovanni da Capestrano, the Abbruzzese Franciscan Observant, is said to have preached a sermon at his funeral before many people, while twenty-three of the thirty miracles recorded concern the men and women of the region.²⁵ The Bollandists also recorded two Italian translations of the *Vita*. One was printed by Celestino Telera, a seventeenth-century Italian Celestine, in his *Historie sagre degli huomini illustri per santità della congregazione de Celestini*, but another was found in a manuscript from Aquila: the current location of the latter is unknown.²⁶ His memory also seems to have been well preserved in his home town of Besançon.²⁷

The *Vita* proceeds in a roughly chronological manner. Following a prologue describing the Fall of Man and the monastic tradition from St Mark to St Benedict and St Peter Celestine, it proceeds quickly from his birth to one of the leading families of Besançon (c.1360) and his initial profession with the Augustinians of Saint-Paul there to his time with the Celestines. His tenures as subprior and prior of Notre-Dame de l'Annonciation in Paris, prior of Saint-Antoine in Amiens, and provincial prior are detailed with many anecdotes. After this, his journey to Aquila and subsequent death there – at the grand age of 85 according to the *Vita* – is recounted at length. The life progression of Bassand, however, will not be the sole focus of this analysis; rather the aim is to analyse the ideals that it represents. The prologue states that Bassand 'promoted, built, and reformed the Celestine religion'.²⁸ The author also declares that his example was not only relevant to the continuation of this reform, but also to men of the world, so that

23 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18330 (Claude Firmin, *Vitae patrum ordinis Celestinorum*, c.1550), fols 34r–35v; the epitaph is not found in the version that came from the Celestines of Avignon (Paris, BnF, MS lat. 5620).

24 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 17692, fol. 102r.

25 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 886, 888–90.

26 'Commentarius Praevius in 'Vita Joannis Bassandi'', 874–5; the MS version was missing the prologue. For Celestino Telera's version, see his *Historie sagre degli huomini illustri per santità della congregazione de Celestini, dell'ordine di s. Benedetto* (1648), 278–338.

27 C.J. Daclin, *Histoire de l'église, ville et diocèse de Besançon*, 2 vols (Besançon, 1750), ii, 23–4.

28 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 876.

‘secular people might also modify their actions by reference to his virtues.’²⁹ Here, in the *Vita*, it will be seen how at least one Celestine of the French province could craft a powerful and up-to-date reflection on monastic life with implications that ran far beyond monastery walls.

Defeating ‘the lion of arrogance’

Central to the reformist vision in the *Vita* was a stress on rigorous asceticism. From his earliest days in Besançon, so the *Vita* states, the young Jean had killed ‘the lion of arrogance and the bear of lust’, despite his civic upbringing: ‘When indeed he was an adolescent, the age of his mind was already immense, while he guarded himself immaculate from the wretched world.’³⁰ Then, as he became a man, he joined the Augustinian order at the house of St Paul in his home town to pursue further this path: ‘he departed from the world along with its trappings, leaving his parents and his property, the doomed goods of the world, as if they were excrement, in order to gain Christ’. Following this, ‘in his 30th year’, he desired ‘to observe vows more strictly’, and came to Paris to join the Celestines, finding ‘a suitable spiritual father’ in the aforementioned Pierre Pocquet. There, finally, he found the rigours he required, ‘the world being crucified to him and he to the world.’³¹

This much would seem a relatively stereotypical ascetic ascent, and there are a number of clear points of reference in earlier hagiographical models. In the mould of St Augustine, his mother had been the primary conduit of spiritual formation, and as with Benedict and many others, the young Bassand is said to have been old in mind even in his youth.³² The hallmarks of his asceticism likewise often appear traditional, albeit they are very sharply and repeatedly stated. Even as a superior, Bassand was a man who enjoyed nothing beyond what his brothers could enjoy, adhering closely to their common life to avoid arrogance. As prior of Amiens, for example, ‘he never broke his fasts, or indulged in corporal comforts, was never slow or negligent in anything; he attended to the labouring brothers and also worked with them.’ He ‘was never absent from the convent or the communal table for any reason or on any occasion, unless he was altogether burdened by the gravest infirmity or showing charity to arriving guests, whom he received

29 Ibid., 876.

30 Ibid., 877.

31 Ibid., 877–8.

32 ‘Vita Joannis Bassandi’, 877; Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, ed. E.G. Gardner (London, 1911), 51.

agreeably according to the precept of the Rule.³³ His bodily mortification was likewise not a new motif for monastic hagiography. It was an element that, as for Benedict, Bernard and many others, was seen in some way to free the soul from the temptations of the flesh, and the *Vita* handles it in the same terms.³⁴ While subprior at Paris, Bassand is described as another Maccabeus, 'a soldier protecting the castles of Jesus Christ with his sword, incessantly wearing down his sensuality with its vices and concupiscences, lest through nurture it should run riot against the spirit, shamelessly seeking delights.'³⁵ And even in old age, leading the reform at Aquila, Bassand only 'extended the measure of his *conversatio*, wearying his flesh by harsher exercises.'³⁶

The last example, however, does perhaps indicate a somewhat wary attitude towards an important aspect of mainstream Benedictine tradition: ascetic moderation. The Rule itself called for moderation when monks were ill.³⁷ That much is indeed celebrated in the *Vita* of Jean Bassand. Bassand himself fell ill 'for several years at time of his tenure as subprior [of Paris]: God had wanted this in order that 'he would neither be wholly destroyed nor prevail in continuous religious exercises, remaining very weak and humbled, so that his strong spirit of unconquerable abstinence would by no means become unappreciative towards mercy or discrete condescension, and hard in dispensing for sick and disabled, who had to be cared for according to the duties of his office', the final phrase being a clear reference to his duty to moderate for the sick and feeble.³⁸ But if Bassand learned to show mercy for others through his own trials, what of Bassand's moderation of his own practices? If it is not explicitly suggested that Bassand made himself ill through his abstinence, it is not clear here – or at any point in the *Vita* – that he ever moderated his own practices: they were 'continuous', his 'spirit of abstinence was unconquerable'. Just as in Bassand's time as prior of Paris ('he never broke his fasts') and his old age (where he employed 'harsher exercises'), the author admits to no let-up. This presents an interesting contrast to the ideals of twelfth-century monastic reform, particularly that of the Cistercians, which emphasized Benedictine ascetic moderation as a preservative of common life: those who did not

33 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 879; c.53 of the Rule of St Benedict sets out how guests were to be treated.

34 Gregory, *Dialogues*, 55–6; William of Saint-Thierry, Arnold of Bonneval and Geoffrey of Auxerre, *The First Life of Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. H. Costello (Collegeville, 2015), 41–2.

35 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 878.

36 *Ibid.*, 884.

37 Benedict of Nursia, *Regula monachorum*, ed. E. Woelfflin (Leipzig, 1896), 40–1 (c.36).

38 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 878.

moderate their ascetic observance were guilty of 'singularity', attempting arrogantly to elevate themselves above others in the community.³⁹ The only mention of 'singularity' in the *Vita* suggests the author was far more concerned to avoid the opposite perception, not that his subject would do more than his community, but stray from common life by doing less: in old age and despite his elevated status, Bassand 'seemed as if daily renewed in spiritual practice, following incessantly the community, and escaping all singularity of a lax life.'⁴⁰

While the ascetic life described here was of a plainly Benedictine mould, a certain unremitting quality can thus be noted. Moderation had not disappeared, but a great monk and superior like Bassand was presented as almost above it: he could not be seen to show any laxity. What lay at the root of this? One finds parallels among other contemporary Observant Benedictines, who likewise appear at the more inflexible end of their tradition. These reformers began to see something in physical breaches of common life, above all the presence of personal property and the trappings of status among the unreformed, that could only lead to mortal sin, regardless of the intention or excuse: as a result, they treated dispensations with suspicion.⁴¹

But there was surely more to this attitude than conflict with proprietor monks, especially in the French Celestine case, since there is no clear sign that they were ever faced with this level of 'laxity', either in their own congregation or in their reform work in Italy. The Celestines themselves had a long history of ascetic scrupulosity, drawn from the eremitic example of their founder, which put a particular emphasis on precise physical standards and routine.⁴² The *Vita* itself suggests another influence on their attitude, however: impressions of their external environment. Descriptions of Bassand's rigorous brand of asceticism appear most prominently in remarks on his leadership, indeed even enhancing its quality. On the reverse side of this coin, the *Vita* makes clear that the spiritual dangers of greed and pride were especially difficult to avoid in high office, and tellingly, it does so in tales that involved external authorities. In the first of these episodes, the attitude of the ascetic monk is explicitly contrasted against that of others who were more ambitious and less worthy. When Martin V (elected 1417, d.1431) offered Bassand the lifelong government of the congregation, the latter

39 G. Constable, 'Moderation and Restraint in Ascetic Practices in the Middle Ages', in *Culture and Spirituality in Medieval Europe*, ed. G. Constable (Aldershot, 1996), 315–27.

40 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 882: 'quasi novus dietim in spiritali exercitio videbatur, sequens indesinenter conventum, omnemque singularitatem vitae laxioris effugiens.'

41 Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors*, 77–9, 93–4.

42 See Chapter 2, 70–100.

rejected it, going as far as to state that he would have preferred to renounce the office that he currently held, that of elected provincial prior (the tenure of which was limited to three years by the French Celestine constitutions):

Most Reverend Father, while my office, which I have reluctantly undertaken, should not be prolonged beyond three years, I am prepared to renounce it forthwith before your Holiness: for I assumed it, not for honour, but to carry a very heavy burden.⁴³

The example of their founder, St Peter Celestine (Celestine V), renouncing the papacy to return to the religious state comes to mind in this reflection. In the passage that follows, the author contrasts Bassand's attitude with that of other leaders. His focus returns to the matter of the 'weak and the sick', for whom the ascetic Bassand cared so much, with the Rule of St Benedict providing inspiration:

O humble and devoted man! Marching down the path of humility, he incessantly followed Christ in order to learn humility and gain meekness of heart from Him. Not so, the undutiful, the ambitious, and the proud: they, seeking every high thing, do not rush to take up the care of souls, as if they might remain without cares, whenever they should have somewhere rightly or wrongly come to office. Indeed, they do not consider the care of the sick with all grace, but claim tyranny over the healthy flock, claiming all that is fat, and cast aside the weak and the sick.⁴⁴

Here, the author leans heavily on an excerpt from chapter 27 of the Rule, concerning the abbot's duty of spiritual care: 'He should know that he has undertaken care of souls that are sick, not tyranny over the healthy; and let him fear the threat of the Prophet, in which God says: "What you saw to be fat you took, and what was weak you cast aside" (Ezek. 34: 3–4).⁴⁵ But while the Benedictine heritage of this thought is obvious, it is interesting to observe that the author does not appear to refer to monastic superiors alone in this statement. The problem appears to be more general, of men 'seeking every lofty thing' wherever they could and especially when holding office.

Indeed, Bassand had given a lesson in humility in office before an outsider, Martin V. One might well wonder here if the legacy of recent crises

43 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 880; see Chapter 2, 84–7, on limits of tenure.

44 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 880–1.

45 Benedict, *Regula*, 35 (c.27).

of authority – particularly within the Church – lurks in the background of the text, given that the episode occurs in conversation with a man elected at Constance to end the Great Western Schism (1378–1417). Such a reading becomes especially tempting when another episode is taken into account: the report of Bassand's conversation with Amadeo VIII of Savoy (d.1451). Amadeo was a Celestine benefactor – he founded the house of Notre-Dame de Bonnes Nouvelles in Lyon between 1407 and 1421 – but subsequently claimed the papacy as Felix V in 1439, having accepted election as pope by the rump of the Council of Basel. By that point (1438), the majority of the Council's participants had moved to Ferrara on the command of Eugenius IV. While support for Felix was limited, his election raised the danger that a wider schism would be revived.⁴⁶ At the request of Charles VII, the *Vita* tells us, Bassand asked Felix to renounce his position, reminding him that it was an 'immoderate burden' and that 'no previous saintly father had taken it up with a willing soul': Celestine V indeed had renounced it to achieve 'purity of conscience'. The *Vita* reports this persuasion strategy as successful (even though, in reality, Bassand died in 1445, some four years before Felix renounced his claim in 1449). Again, Jean Bassand's Celestine ascetic attitude to office-holding is presented as an antidote to the temptations of power and status that were perceived as active far beyond the monastic world.

Both the pointed attitude towards monastic asceticism and the deep concerns over corruption in authority seem to suggest a very negative assessment of man's susceptibility to sin. But the writer of the *Vita* was not without hope that man could rise above his flesh. Communities and institutions could likewise still be perfected, despite the grave temptations that troubled those who led them. There is no call here as there had been with St Peter Celestine's Spiritual Franciscan acquaintance, Angelo Clareno (d.1337), to simply 'flee to the mountains' in the face of an all too corruptible institutional church.⁴⁷ Before Martin V, Bassand ultimately only declined the sort of authority that was not approved within his order (holding the provincial office for more than three years at a time). He stated that he was 'prepared to renounce' the provincial office he held at the time, recognizing the weight of the burden, but nevertheless he did not. Similarly, the ancient fathers he spoke of before Felix had not taken up authority willingly, but

46 See Chapter 4 and 5 on Lyon; on Amadeo's 'papacy', see U. Giessman, 'Felix V, the Last Antipope', in *A Companion to the Council of Basel*, ed. M. Decaluwé, G. Christianson and T.M. Izbicki (Leiden, 2016), 443–67.

47 D. Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans* (University Park, 2001), 69, 294. Celestine V had offered Angelo's group protection as the 'Poor Hermits of Pope Celestine'.

they had done so nevertheless. Bassand is also duly praised in old age, while out of office, for being ‘so voluntarily obedient to superiors’; there is, despite everything, a recognition of the necessity and worthiness of an institutional and hierarchical order, through which men could lead other men back to God.⁴⁸

The writer indeed saw the Celestines as edging towards a new perfection. Bassand’s virtuous example looked backwards to previous models. He is described in the prologue as the product of a long tradition that went back to Mark the Evangelist and the Desert Fathers who had followed him, men who ‘thought little of the present world and lived in deserted places, and pleased the Most High in their manner of living.’ But to judge by the tradition described in the prologue, it would seem that Christian perfection was always being refashioned over the ages. From the Desert Fathers, there arose a new set of ‘perfect religious, serving under a rule and an abbot’, a development in which the Celestines could see themselves as representing the cutting edge: owing to the efforts of their founder, St Peter Celestine, a faithful follower of Benedict who was ‘the father of the monks, the glory of the coenobites’, they ‘revived so glorious a father [Benedict] in our own times’. Bassand, the final successor, likewise ‘promoted, built, and reformed the Celestine Religion’.⁴⁹

This passage represents a tradition of reform, the continuing path of man towards a divine likeness, a path that looked backwards but also forwards. The Celestines were thus more than mere feeble imitations of their predecessors; rather they revived their example in a manner appropriate to their own times. Moreover, the author emphasizes another facet of the ‘idea of reform’ that Gerhart Ladner highlighted: repeatability.⁵⁰ In the tradition seen above, Bassand was, from one aspect, the latest representative of divine providence. On the other hand, as will be seen, the *Vita* also defines him as a representative of structures of authority and community that worked to engender reform both within Celestine communities and beyond.

The observance of monastic legislation: ‘the regular ladder’

In the *Vita*, monastic legislation plays a central role, both as a restraint indispensable to the safety of a monk’s soul and as a vehicle of reform.

48 ‘Vita Joannis Bassandi’, 882.

49 Ibid., 876.

50 Ladner, *Idea of Reform*, 35.

‘Regular observance’ or ‘regular discipline’, the most common maxims of Observant monasticism, are cited no less than twenty-two times in the *Vita* in praising Bassand’s way of life and that which he promoted. This terminology was used by the writer to suggest stricter observance of written precept, including not only the Rule of St Benedict but also the Celestines’ own constitutions. For instance, during Bassand’s reigns as provincial prior, the *Vita* states that ‘he congratulated whenever he saw young brothers love the Rule and Constitutions ardently and with devoted spirit, hoping that through such men regular observance would continue to be supported’.⁵¹ When he came to reform the monastery of Santa Maria di Collemaggio, it was to return it to ‘regular observance’. There he called on all to ‘preserve the mandates of the Holy Rule under which they served, and the Constitutions of the religion whose habit they wore, as is most appropriate for religious men.’ The monks of the house were taught ‘not to pass over prescribed offices and avoid any relaxation in regular observance’.⁵²

According to the *Vita*, Bassand himself was from his earliest days among the Celestines ‘inflamed by a zeal for regular observance’. Under the guidance of his spiritual father, Pierre Pocquet, ‘he left nothing neglected that pertained to the state of regular observance’.⁵³ And even before that, during his time among the Augustinians of Saint-Paul, ‘his devoted life and *conversatio* shaped the souls of his religious to hold fast to regular observance [of the Rule of St Augustine] more strictly’.⁵⁴ But it is perhaps particularly with regard to his leadership, as seen in the examples in the previous paragraph, that the language of ‘regular observance’ is most prominent. Despite the fact that the *Vita* celebrates Bassand as a religious superior, his leadership of reform is usually tightly delimited by the equation of his own actions and directions to the brothers with ‘regular observance’. As the French Celestine provincial, he was ‘second to none in regular observance’;⁵⁵ and throughout his work at Aquila, the theme of ‘regular observance’ is cited no fewer than seven times.⁵⁶ While he was not without a certain forcefulness – as prior of Amiens he was an ‘avenger of faults, the sharpest critic of transgressions, furnishing to all the manner of living well’ – the same line makes clear that he did so as a ‘venerator of commands’. Just before this, the *Vita* again makes clear exactly what sort of commands he venerated:

⁵¹ ‘Vita Joannis Bassandi’, 880.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 883, 884–5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 878.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 877–8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 880.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 883–4.

'he never relaxed the Rule of blessed Benedict or the holy Constitutions'. The authority of monastic legislation – including not only the Rule but also the Celestines' own constitutions – was constantly emphasized as defining Bassand's actions.⁵⁷

From one aspect, this stress on monastic legislation as defining the obedience of all – including superiors – was in line with ancient monastic tradition. The elevation of the Rule to a level where its commands, or at least those expressed as binding, could be seen as laws of monastic life had been ongoing since the time of Benedict of Aniane (d.821). For the Cistercian St Bernard (d.1153), in his influential *De praecepto et dispensatione*, the Rule took on a defining role as a common object of obedience, since all professed obedience 'according to the Rule'; he stated clearly that the abbot was not 'above the Rule', 'for he himself once freely placed himself beneath it'.⁵⁸ For Bernard too, the role of a superior could appear to be that of an administrator or exemplar of the Rule for those in his care: he could not lead without reference to it. In circumstances where the abbot ordered something which was not fitting with the Rule, Bernard proposed that such a command might even be rejected, since the monk had only promised obedience 'according to the Rule': 'I can be obliged to perform only that which I have promised'.⁵⁹

That said, one would be hard pressed to find monastic *vitae* from earlier centuries with quite the same insistent stress on the observance of the Rule and other monastic legislation as Bassand's *Vita*. To take examples from the preceding waves of Benedictine reform, references to the Rule are certainly far from lacking in Gregory the Great's *Vita* of Benedict, John of Salerno's *Vita* of Odo of Cluny and the *Vita Prima* of St Bernard.⁶⁰ Gregory celebrates the Rule as a translation of Benedict's virtues in life: 'Of whose life and *conversatio*, if any be curious to know further, he may in the institution of that rule understand all his manner of life and discipline: for the holy man could not otherwise teach, than he himself lived'.⁶¹ Odo's *Vita* likewise contains multiple citations of the Rule.⁶² The *Vita Prima* of

57 Ibid., 879.

58 Bernard of Clairvaux, 'De praecepto et dispensatione', in *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*, vol. i: *Treatises*, ed. C. Greenia (Kalamazoo, 1970), 71–150, at 111.

59 Ibid., 112–13; B.K. Lackner, 'Bernard of Clairvaux on Abbots', *American Benedictine Review*, 33 (1982), 427–41, makes the point that Bernard's ideal abbot was somewhat more limited in power than that of the Cluniac tradition in this manner.

60 Gregory, *Dialogues*, 51–101; John of Salerno, 'Life of St Odo of Cluny', in *St Odo of Cluny*, ed. G. Sitwell (London, 1958), 1–88; William of Saint-Thierry *et al.*, *First Life*.

61 Gregory, *Dialogues*, 99.

62 John of Salerno, 'Life of St Odo', contains at least twenty-six citations of the Rule.

St Bernard contains fewer direct citations, but leans a little closer to the style of the *Vita* of Bassand where regulation and discipline is mentioned: Bernard was 'a fervent novice under the strict rule of the [Cistercian] order, under strict discipline'; under his abbacy, there was 'fervour for the discipline of the Rule' at Clairvaux; and his brothers placed the houses that they founded 'under the rules of that more strict discipline.'⁶³ This said, such descriptions are not as frequent as the mentions of 'regular observance' and 'regular discipline' in the *Vita* of Bassand: in all of these earlier texts, there is rather less concern to display their subjects' constant conformity to the Rule, and the emphasis on obedience to supplementary monastic legislation is lacking, despite the existence of customs among the Cluniacs and constitutions among the Cistercians. Ultimately, in the periods in which the earlier *vitae* were written, the worth of obedience to human superiors in monastic life still held the pre-eminent place, albeit within the context of the Rule. This principle had an even older pedigree than the Rule of St Benedict and was strongly upheld within it. The Rule explicitly left many aspects of observance to the abbot's judgement: for 'obedience shown to superiors is given to God.'⁶⁴ The abbots described in these *vitae* appear to act with a great deal of freedom and were celebrated for spontaneous action, including, in Bernard's case, the decision to temporarily remove himself from the cloister to pursue a more active ministry. Bernard himself, despite his statements above, strongly upheld such freedom in the *De praecepto et dispensatione*: for obedience 'according to the Rule' was anything but narrowly defined. He confirmed that all the precepts it contained were, in the final analysis, submitted to the 'divine law' of 'charity', which they were designed to serve: it was this that gave obedience 'according to the Rule' religious meaning across circumstances that its writer could not predict. Ultimately, he found that it was almost entirely the sole preserve of superiors, 'those to whom God has granted insight and entrusted with authority', to 'omit, intermit, or alter [precepts] for the sake of the very charity which conceived them.'⁶⁵ The abbatial commands that could still be refused were broadly those that did not conform to this divine purpose, in line with St Peter's counsel that 'we must obey God rather than men': nevertheless, Bernard scarcely offered any room for this in practice (*De praecepto* 4–5). There had to be 'no doubt' whatsoever that the law of God had been breached through

63 William of Saint-Thierry *et al.*, *First Life*, 26, 43, 134.

64 Benedict, *Regula*, 15–16 (c.5).

65 Bernard, 'De praecepto', 108–9.

wilful disobedience.⁶⁶ Otherwise, the gravest sin would be incurred by not following one's superior, the only living dispenser of this 'divine law' to be trusted within the community: 'Let us then accept as from God himself all the words of him who is God's representative, so long as he does not speak against God.'⁶⁷ The 'regular observance' seen in the *Vita* of Jean Bassand, on the other hand, presents a far more restrictive image of conformity to monastic legislation, and indeed a conformity which seems as much focused on the letter as on the spirit of the texts. The constant equation of Bassand's leadership with observance of both the Rule and the Celestine constitutions suggests that the writer of the *Vita* did not possess the same trust which Bernard placed in superiors to circumstantially dispense from the Rule and other monastic legislation.

As will become clearer, Bernard's logic of a divine law that overrode monastic legislation is not entirely denied in Bassand's *Vita*. Nevertheless, the heightened devotion to monastic legislation that has been witnessed suggests that these regulations were now seen as closer to that higher divine standard than in previous generations. Additionally, the *Vita* suggests two deeply spiritual drives behind this more literalistic interpretation of monastic life. Firstly, it appears closely entwined with the rigorous, unremitting ascetic outlook through which Bassand responded to the arrogance and lusts that seemed to abound in his environment. If the social circumstances of the Celestines meant that Bassand remained in touch with a world of luxury and status, the strict observance of legislation allowed him to face those dangers head on by excluding them in a physical, tangible manner, as well as providing a platform for repeated penitential actions. As prior of Amiens it is said that Bassand 'never relaxed the Rule of the blessed Benedict or the holy constitutions', precisely so that he would 'never break his fasts, or indulge in corporal comforts'.⁶⁸ Such a literal observance, moreover, seemed to ensure a fixed common life in which no one, not even a superior, could become prideful by enjoying something that was exceptional, however minor and seemingly excusable. The desire not to be seen to omit anything from the regular observance of his brothers seems very relatable to what has already been seen of Bassand's own unremitting ascetic observance and the *Vita*'s reflections on the corrupting effects of power. All these statements were in fact made against a background in which the Celestine constitutions carefully sketched out all the minutiae of the monks' lives in exacting detail,

66 Ibid., 119.

67 Ibid., 122.

68 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 879.

and took the offences of superiors especially seriously, laying down harsher punishments and creating congregational structures that emphasized accountability. These structures pushed beyond Benedictine tradition: Bassand operated within a congregational system where the power of superiors was fundamentally more restricted than in the general and provincial chapter systems operated by the Cistercians and prescribed for the Black Monks by *Summi magistri* (1336): within the French Celestine system, there were no abbots, the priors of every house were chosen by the incoming provincial prior at every triennial provincial chapter, rather than being elected for life by their convents, and the same provincial prior had to stand down after three years, with no possibility of immediate re-election.⁶⁹

Literal observance also emerges as more than a mere defence against the temptations of the world, which, especially in the urban climes in which their monasteries were usually built, the French Celestines could perhaps only partially escape. It is also presented as a spiritually perfecting, reforming mechanism. In the introductory section concerning the reformist tradition of Bassand's monastic forefathers, monastic legislation and its observance appears to be a defining factor within the lives of the 'perfect religious' he mentions. Quoting Gregory the Great, Benedict's chief virtue was 'constructing a Rule, excellent for its discretion and eloquent in its style'; St Peter Celestine in turn graciously 'honoured him [Benedict], so that he followed him as a legitimate son in all observance in the religion instituted by him, by following the Rule of his father.'⁷⁰ The author also elevated the Celestines' own voluminous constitutions, which he happily described as 'holy' and made part of the object of 'regular observance'. Where legislation appeared to encompass observance, the actions of men could be elevated onto a higher plane. On his deathbed, Bassand spoke to his monks of 'scaling the regular ladder of our legislator by increments of virtue, so that they should deserve finally to reach the Lord Jesus as their reward, at the end of the ladder.' While his words echoed Benedict's description of Jacob's ladder, ascended through interior humility, here regular observance itself had seemingly become conflated with that virtue.⁷¹ The strict observance of monastic legislation was very much identified with ideas of genuine spiritual ascent in the *Vita*.

If its author drew from images of Benedictine past in order to make this link, more contemporary influences cannot be ignored. Bassand's spiritual father, Pierre Pocquet had been a lawyer in the world, the *Vita* states. He is

69 See Chapter 2 on these issues.

70 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 876; Gregory, *Dialogues*, 99.

71 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 875; Benedict, *Regula*, 17 (c.7).

described as ‘a most perfect man and most learned in the school of monastic discipline, who was a distinguished doctor of civil law in the world, and whose doctrine was very often selected by many judges, especially by the royal Parlement of Paris.’⁷² In this image, Pocquet’s secular legal training seems to provide a foundation for his religious perfection: if he was a *doctor* in law, he was *doctissimus* in monastic discipline. Such a connection makes sense within the French Celestine social context, with its ties to urban and learned culture. The late Middle Ages were an age when both canon and Roman lawyers elevated law to a higher spiritual plane: in their eyes, as Walter Ullman put it, law became ‘the very agency through which the divine power motivates human beings and directs their life in society.’⁷³ In elevating their own legislation, the Celestines mirrored this line of thought.

Affection, unity and the ‘opinion of friends’

The *Vita*’s emphasis on obedience to a body of monastic legislation did not, however, remain unalloyed. The image of Bassand caring for the sick once again proves illustrative. Dispensation for the ill and infirm was of course defined within the Rule (‘Care of the sick must rank above and before all else’),⁷⁴ as well as in the Celestine constitutions, which draw directly from the former in stating that all superiors were to ‘hold care for the infirm before and above all other things.’⁷⁵ But the presence of ‘mercy and discreet condescension’ in Bassand’s governance might nevertheless be read as something of an affective counterpoint to the stress on a more unswerving obedience to legislation. Elsewhere Bassand is similarly described as a dispenser of affection. While subprior of Paris, ‘he was almost a mother in the monastery’, and ‘all were embraced by his maternal affection.’⁷⁶ On his deathbed at Aquila, after exhorting his monks to ‘scale the regular ladder’, he comforted them:

But also with such fervour, with such zeal of religion, with such sincerity of a most devoted spirit, he addressed his brothers surrounding his bed,

72 ‘Vita Joannis Bassandi’, 878: ‘virum perfectissimum atque doctissimum in schola monastice discipline, qui doctor egregius juris civilis erat in seculo, cujusque doctrina sepius a multis iudicibus, a a parlamento regio Parisiensi frequentius allegatur, seque divine servituti sub habitu Religionis Celestinorum dicaverat’.

73 Ullman, *Medieval Idea of Law*, 18. See Chapter 2, 102–110, for further discussion of this connection.

74 Benedict, *Regula*, 40 (c.36).

75 ‘Die ältesten Konstitutionen’: Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 493 (c.23).

76 ‘Vita Joannis Bassandi’, 878.

faithfully advising them that they should not surround themselves with most bitter tears and sighs. Oh true, best doctor of regular observance, penetrating the hearts of his sons with the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.⁷⁷

In the context of other Observant Benedictine congregations, it has been argued that an affective spirituality of twelfth-century heritage, emphasizing the experience of God's love as the end product of monastic life, was placed alongside more literal definitions of observance, serving to appease those monks who grew fearful in the face of such stringent regulation.⁷⁸ The French Celestines, unlike those groups, did not attempt to reform existing communities where standards were different until their Italian activities at the very end of the period under study. It may indeed be significant that this point – the need to alloy 'regular observance' with affection – appears to emerge in Bassand's words to his monks at Santa Maria di Collemaggio. But even for those who had professed with the French Celestines, consistent conformity to the ascetic, penitential and liturgical efforts that the Rule and especially their constitutions demanded would surely have been harder to maintain without a dose of affective tenderness in their outlook to sweeten the pill.

The *Vita*, however, goes much further than simply sweetening the burden of French Celestine life. As much as the demands of 'regular observance' appear throughout the text, the taste of Bernardine thought had not been entirely lost; rather it seems to have subtly evolved in line with their scrupulous concern to excise all potential sources of sin from their communities. The *Vita*, in fact, makes the point quite explicitly that observance of legislation had to remain subject to a deeper contemplation, encompassing both the spiritual health of the individual and the community. The latter is praised as an aspect of Bassand's monastic outlook:

Whatever he read, he related to morals, avoiding profane novelties of words and knowledge falsely so called (1 Tim. 6: 20); he declared among the brothers that he knew nothing else except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2: 2), even though he was an expert in law (*legisperitus*) and sufficiently well taught.⁷⁹

77 Ibid., 885.

78 J. Van Engen, 'Conversion and Conformity in the Early Fifteenth Century', in *Conversion: old worlds and new*, ed. K. Mills and A. Grafton (Rochester, 2003), 39–45; see also Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors*, 176.

79 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 879.

Bassand thus gave precedence to the ultimate aim of coming closer to Christ and his gift of mercy in interpreting whatever he read. His status as an ‘expert in law’ is cited as something that might have served to distance him from humility before God and, moreover, his brothers, if he had not done so.

The author of the *Vita* had in fact mentioned ‘experts in law’ in his prologue. Prior to recalling the examples of the Desert Fathers, Benedict’s praiseworthy authoring of the Rule, and the obedience of the Celestines to it, he invoked the image of the disciples: ‘rustic and simple men [...] not men of power, not nobles, not experts or doctors in law (*non legis peritos aut doctores*)’, called by Jesus ‘so that through untaught men He might destroy the wisdom of the wise, and reject the science of the prudent’ (cf. 1 Cor. 1: 19).⁸⁰ Here we see men with legal training placed alongside the powerful, and contrasted with the humble disciples: an expertise in law (*lex*) thus seems to be related to the arrogance that could come with authority.⁸¹

The author did not explicitly refer to the Rule as *lex* (albeit that the Rule itself did on several occasions),⁸² nor did he place the Celestine constitutions in this category. Nevertheless, the suggestion that an overly pharisaic attitude, an obsession with ‘the novelties of words and knowledge falsely so called’ as the author put it in the previous example, could draw one away from humility remains clear enough and was a point that could apply to any sort of code.

The author’s attitude here may seem paradoxical given that, at many other points, the *Vita* stresses the importance of ‘regular observance’ – that is, the strict observance of a body of monastic legislation – in preserving the humility of Bassand. But experience would surely have shown that there were pitfalls: if Observant attitudes towards legislation could lead men into fear, they also provided many grounds for accusation and backbiting and recrimination, and for those in office, the prideful subjugation of their juniors. That the author of the *Vita* wished to make clear that Bassand in particular was no Pharisee, and had not grown prideful through wielding legal authority, makes particular sense when structural changes among the French Celestines are taken into account. The independence of the French province from their Italian brothers coincided not only with a declared emphasis on strict ‘regular observance’, but also, with the strengthened position of a relatively small group of French Celestine prelates, who effectively rotated

80 Ibid., 875.

81 There are parallels here with the thought of the Carthusian Nicholas Kempf, who associated expertise in canon law with arrogance. See D.D. Martin, *Fifteenth Century Carthusian Reform: the world of Nicholas Kempf* (Leiden, 1992), 74.

82 See Chapter 2, 102, for a discussion of the use of *lex* in the Rule.

the leadership of the congregation between them. Bassand – elected five times as provincial prior, a feat achieved by no Italian abbot-general – was indeed one of them.⁸³ Their power was achieved through subtle alterations to their capitular system that gave the priors and other officials picked by the outgoing provincial prior an effective majority in the election of his successor.⁸⁴ If these changes seem to run counter to the spirit of the congregational system that their constitutions described, there was an ideological sense to them. If ‘regular observance’ was in part meant to ensure the humility of superiors, it also called on them to enforce legislation with vigour: the petition for independence that they sent to the Avignonese pope Clement VII is reported to have said that ‘regular observance was not prevailing as it ought to in the order.’⁸⁵ Nevertheless, these changes effectively meant that something more than legislation was required to ensure the humility of superiors, and left the danger open that ‘regular observance’ could become associated with a sort of monastic tyranny.

There are parallels here with the tensions felt within the reform currents of the wider Church. William Durant the Younger’s journey to the conciliarist position and then back to a far more potent view of the papal office appears to have been grounded in his belief in the supremacy of law. On the one hand, a law that encompassed all might call for the accountability of prelates; on the other, the fact that common standards were fixed in law meant that the consistency of hierarchical enforcement was a natural model, and one with great precedent in canon law.⁸⁶ Such might seem to condemn legal approaches to contemporary Church reform as rather self-defeating. But just as such difficulties did not go unnoticed within the *Vita*, they were also recognized by Church reformers. The critique of ‘law’ as a potential tool of the proud was one which found close parallels in the thought of Jean Gerson, the chancellor of the University of Paris and leading light of the Council of Constance: he was also, as will be seen, a close associate of the French Celestines. Gerson believed that a rising confusion of ‘positive law’, which for him comprised much of canon law, with ‘divine law’ created many dangers: it was a position he set out most clearly in his famous series of lectures from 1402, *De vita spirituali animae*.⁸⁷ There he took aim at canon lawyers and

83 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 371–2.

84 See Chapter 2, 110–14 on this issue.

85 Bull of Clement VII (*Sacre vestre religionis observantia*, 25 January 1380): Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 380. See Chapter 2, 65–7, on this petition.

86 C. Fasolt, *Council and Hierarchy* (Cambridge, 1991), 315–18.

87 Jean Gerson, ‘De vita spirituali animae’, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, iii (1962), no. 97, 113–202.

ecclesiastical prelates for using positive law as a tool to rule their subjects through fear, placing what were, in his opinion, false burdens on their souls through its agency.⁸⁸ Alongside these groups, he included certain monastic superiors: 'We add that in no religion established to whatever extent by vow, does the obligation to follow all things that are conserved within the religion fall under the penalty of mortal sin. Those asserting the opposite, who maintain that their tradition creates more obligation than evangelic law, have gone mad with pharisaic presumption.'⁸⁹

In the context of efforts to heal the Schism, this aspect of Gerson's thought underwent further development, since for him this confusion over 'law' was exactly how the rival parties were able to prolong the division: in Gerson's eyes, it was by treating human law as divine that they accused and damned each other, entrenched their claims to supremacy, and declined all calls for reconciliation. He pronounced before Benedict XIII at Avignon that '[h]uman laws, as established, are not sufficient for finding an end to the present schism unless the superior law, divine, living, and architectonic, is consulted'. Like the *Vita*, he too cited the example of the Pharisees who had 'voided the law of God by their traditions' (Matt. 15: 6).⁹⁰ In doing so, he moved close to the logic of Bernard's *De praecepto et dispensatione*, a source he would explicitly cite in *De vita spirituali animae*. Like Bernard, he saw the duty to moderate positive law as a hierarchical function for the most part, as the fact of his preaching this message to Benedict suggests.⁹¹ For Gerson, however, the circumstances of efforts to end the Schism and to reform the Church had raised the possibility that the preservation of peace and unity was a necessity that overrode obedience to anointed superiors; promoting division was placed in the same category as the wilful disobedience to God that Bernard had spoken of. Moreover, if Gerson considered the re-establishment of a strong hierarchy as absolutely essential for healing the divided Church, over time he came to propose lateral and communal agencies for ensuring the accountability of high-ranking prelates, including the pope, especially over this key issue of unity. He supported the notion

88 L.B. Pascoe, *Jean Gerson: principles of Church reform* (Leiden, 1973), 58–63; L.B. Pascoe, 'Religious Orders, Evangelical Liberty and Reform in the Thought of Jean Gerson', in *Reformbemühungen und Observanzbestrebungen im spätmittelalterlichen Ordenswesen*, ed. K. Elm (Berlin, 1989), 504–11, at 506–7; D.Z. Flanagan, 'God's Divine Law', in *The Church, Councils and Reform*, ed. G. Christianson, T.M. Izbicki and C.M. Bellitto (Washington, DC, 2008), 101–21, at 106–8.

89 Gerson, 'De vita spirituali animae', 193.

90 Jean Gerson, 'Apparuit gratia Dei', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, v (1965), no. 212, 64–90, at 73–4, cited in Flanagan, 'God's Divine Law', 105.

91 See Pascoe, *Jean Gerson*, on the hierarchical nature of Gerson's thought.

that qualified theologians like himself were entitled to correct these men, just as Paul had corrected Peter.⁹² But perhaps his most telling contribution for the future of conciliar reform was his eventual support for the idea that fraternal correction could be enforced on the pope. He drew this idea from the Bible, especially Matt. 18: 15–20 ('If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault [...]'). The pope too was a brother among Christians, since he shared the same mother (the Church), and the same father (God) as everyone else, and he too could be subject to the gospel principle that 'if a brother refuses to listen to the Church, let him be to you as a gentile and a tax collector' (Matt. 18: 17).⁹³ For Gerson, the fraternal correction he envisaged was distinct from the sort of divisive mutual recrimination that he saw as being practised by certain canon lawyers: he presented it as a function of unity, indeed requiring consensus within the *congregatio fidelium* to enact.⁹⁴

The impact of such thinking – i.e. that unity was the primary aim of reform as well as one of its best agencies – is reflected in the *Vita*. Charity to one's brothers and fraternal correction were values with a long history in monastic life, but the context of an otherwise strict Celestine observance and contemporary external concerns meant that they were brought to life in distinctive ways.

In one of the more detailed descriptions of Bassand's conduct as provincial prior, the *Vita* shows Bassand proceeding beyond the Rule and constitutions in the presence of other members of the community:

For, so devotedly, so purely, and so effectively did he moderate his words in the chapters, in collations, and in the colloquia of the religious fathers, that he used the most simple, effective speech in explaining the Rule, constitutions, ordinations, and books of the doctors, intermingling affectionate sighs, humbly adding differences of opinion, and fervently bringing forward the sayings of the ancient fathers.⁹⁵

While much of this seems to have taken place in the context of legally and hierarchically constituted meetings of the brothers, aspects of the image go beyond the description of the relationship between superior and community

92 Pascoe, *Jean Gerson*, 90–1.

93 Jean Gerson, 'Libellus articulorum contra Petrum de Luna', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, vi (1965), no. 286, 265–77, at 267–8, cited in Flanagin, 'God's Divine Law', 115–16.

94 Gerson, 'Libellus articulorum contra Petrum de Luna', 268.

95 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 880.

defined by the Celestine constitutions. When monastic legislation is cited by Bassand, their meaning is at least expounded by the superior before the community ('explaining the Rule and constitutions'). The 'affectionate sighs', harking back to his tenderness towards the brothers, likewise suggest that he saw this meaning as defined by charitable ends. The part concerning him 'humbly adding differences of opinion' has two potential interpretations. It might simply be read as Bassand resolving differences of opinion and contradictions in the texts he brought before the community. But one could also wonder whether these differences in some way reflected the opinions of other Celestines within these meetings. What is at least clear is that the creation of unity, harmony of opinion, and the appearance (at least) of humility before the community was key in making 'regular observance' work. Rather than simply defining potentially contentious and divisive outcomes by virtue of his constitutional authority, the author took pains to note that Bassand explained them humbly and with affection for all.

Of course, it is not stated here what might have happened if Bassand had not been such an open and humble superior before his community. However, a logic similar to Gerson's eventual approach to conciliarism is found within the *Vita's* account of Bassand's aforementioned meeting with 'Felix V' (formerly Amadeo VIII, duke of Savoy). After Bassand describes the virtue found in renouncing power, Felix responds through legal argument, stating that his authority is 'legitimate' since his election was 'most just'. He believed himself to have been rightly 'called and elected to the summit of the highest pontificate by the whole of the general synod of Basel, legitimately congregated in the Holy Spirit.'⁹⁶ For Bassand, however, the support of legal principle, even the principle of conciliarism expressed in legal terms ('legitimately congregated in the Holy Spirit'), did not necessarily save his exercise of authority from the sins of arrogance and greed, since, as cited earlier, this was a burden that the best of his predecessors had not taken up willingly. Nor did it negate the need for him to sacrifice himself if it was in the best interests of the community. Even supposing that he had been 'elected as pope worthily and justly' at the Council of Basel, he nevertheless should have rejected the role in order to give 'an excellent example to Christians that one should not stray from the paths of truth and peace.'⁹⁷

The fact that his claim was continually contested and that schism had again emerged gave the lie to the stance taken by Felix: whatever the manner of his election, his exercise of authority had led to a division that went against

⁹⁶ Ibid., 881.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

the divinely instituted unity of the Church, an act of arrogance that caused consternation among the community he claimed to care for. Any ‘conciliar’ validity to his election was, for Bassand, in fact conditional on the consensus of many other leaders in the Church, including both churchmen and laymen: such a claim would ‘assume that the leading Christians would have met entirely with your wishes, including the outstanding men of Christianity, and your best relatives of the fleur-de-lis [the French monarchy], who I esteem very highly in faith.’ Even if he was right, and the body of the Church had elected him – and indeed in the place of another, Eugenius IV, whose claim was unchallenged by the vast majority of Western princes and the councils he reconvened at Ferrara (1438) and then Florence (1439) –, could that same community not now move to correct him, if it was agreed that he had contradicted the divine ‘paths of truth and peace’? Bassand appears here as an agent of fraternal correction in the name of peace and unity, bringing this value to life outside the cloister and in the face of a man who claimed the highest authority. He might have gone as an envoy of Charles VII and, by extension, Eugenius IV, but once he gained a private interview (*‘secretum colloquium habuerunt’*), ‘he set forth the wish of all the faithful’.⁹⁸ The duty of fraternal correction he thus undertook is also clearly grounded as charitable towards all, including Felix himself. Thus,

begging, with the sincerity of a pure heart, that so great a prince (who had only a while ago seemed virtuous) and who had directed his dominions with judgment and justice, and who seemed to have left the present world, being advanced in his days, would not end his old age in a worse state.⁹⁹

In the next clause, Bassand’s charitable manner and purpose is seen to give his argument compelling weight, as Bassand entreats him to ‘concede to the opinion of his friends, whose prayers, if he were reasonable, he should hear.’¹⁰⁰

This sort of peaceful, uniting and charitable counsel is thus presented as a potential counter to the validity of harmful justifications and recriminations derived from legislation. If the *Vita* does not show these principles being applied to a monastic leader by subordinates, the story of Bassand’s meeting with Felix places a Pauline value that had long been at the core of Benedictine monastic life – of brothers counselling and charitably correcting each other – at the heart of contemporary options in religious governance,

⁹⁸ ‘Vita Joannis Bassandi’, 881.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

and, above all, emphasizes the fundamental relationship of peace and unity with the reform of individual and community in this age.

* * *

In sum, the *Vita* describes reformist principles which were thoroughly intertwined with the wider tastes, concerns and debates of its place and time. It casts monastic example both as responsive to this wider world but also as a pre-eminent solution to its trials. Its portrayal of unrelenting asceticism as something that liberated the soul from arrogance, rather than a potential sign of prideful ‘singularity’, marked a subtle shift from the thought of preceding generations of Benedictine reformers; through its emphasis on humility in authority and the virtue of renunciation, a monk like Bassand could also be juxtaposed with the ‘ambitious and proud’ who seemed to haunt the contemporary scene. The suspicion, evinced in the text, that the attraction and the practice of authority over men were very frequently corrupting, was obviously a difficult subject to handle in a monastic environment in which obedience to superiors was a traditional feature of paramount importance. Its writer, however, had not lost all hope in the potential for human communities and their hierarchies to operate in an upright and pure manner, but rather believed in the potential for their reform. What was required was a readjustment of the structures of common life and community that they had inherited from the Benedictine past. Paralleling external intellectual developments, the importance of restraining and perfecting structures – legislation as well as unity and fraternal guidance – was reinforced in the *Vita*, which gave these facets pride of place in the reform of their communities, their leadership and the Church as a whole. There were classic monastic questions at stake here, those of the limits of asceticism, the authority of monastic legislation versus the authority of the superior, the observance of fixed norms versus spiritual freedom, and obedience to higher structures versus the possibility of moderation from below. But the author of the *Vita* set out a responsive synthesis that was contemporary and cutting edge, presenting a new, if still characteristically Benedictine monastic reflection that he felt had a relevance that carried far beyond French Celestine enclosures. All this from a late medieval monastic reform movement of the sort that once seemed to have ‘contributed nothing essentially new to the ideology’!¹⁰¹

101 C.J. Pfeffer, *Monastic Spirituality* (New York, 1966), 56.

Signs of tension within this ‘outlook’ are also clear, however. The author posited a rigorous ascetic common life and a willingness to renounce power as relevant counter-examples to the greed and ambition that he perceived as abundant in contemporary society. But if this example was to have any reach within the outside world, as the writer of the *Vita* wanted it to have – Bassand’s example was also relevant for ‘secular people’, who could ‘modify their actions in light of his virtue’ –, ¹⁰² did the French Celestines not risk diluting their message or even grave hypocrisy? Felix could arguably have accused the monk of this despite the latter’s apparent renunciation of the world: Bassand had taken time away from his own monastery and returned to the world, and there received high office (if only a temporary one) as a diplomatic envoy of the king of France. As he called Felix to take a step away from worldly ambition, from another perspective Bassand might well have been perceived as stepping into it. The dilemma between monasticism as ‘other-worldly’ and monasticism as an organ of Christian society was, of course, ever-present in monastic tradition, but the outlook of the *Vita* placed an enormous stress on both and thus increased the potential for tension.

From another perspective, for all the awareness and concern for affectivity, accountability and unity in the *Vita*, there remains an ambivalence between the unremitting enforcement of discipline and more affectionate and irenic tones, which is far from entirely resolved. Despite the underlying thread within the *Vita* that strict observance had to be weighed against the need for peace and unity within the community, the text continually reaffirms the paramount importance of the former: overall, ‘regular observance’ seems to guard an underlying divine template of community not only from bad prelates but also from popular whims. In turn, the authority of superiors, despite strong critiques, often remained indispensable to this vision of ‘regular observance’. Fundamentally, not all matters were up for discussion, and many, perhaps most, had simply to be enforced upon the community. Bassand thus had to be ‘the avenger of faults’ and the ‘sharpest critic of transgressions’. Tradition likewise reinforced his role: fundamental ecclesiastical ideology, so strongly tied to a monopoly of sacramental administration descending from Peter, and inherited models of sanctity, in which God worked through the leadership of his elect, still looked towards anointed leaders. As seen, Bassand is presented as an heir to a tradition of monastic fathers; the text also describes how God himself decided ‘to advance a tireless labourer of virtue for his flock’ when Bassand first took

102 ‘*Vita Joannis Bassandi*’, 876.

up authority at Paris.¹⁰³ From a psychological aspect, moreover, those who had access to such power – including Bassand and his circle, among which one can include the author of the *Vita* – would probably have been jealous to guard it at some level.

Not all men perhaps could be counted as faithful ‘friends’, as Bassand and his backers claimed to be to Felix. And consequently, despite the nuanced, reflective view of monastic life ascribed to Bassand and the French Celestines in the *Vita*, it is doubtful that all would have seen them in such a glowing light. This may well have been the case for many of the monks of Santa Maria di Collemaggio, the Italian Celestine monastery that Bassand reformed in 1444, and their supporters. The *Vita* itself indicates that while some citizens of Aquila had petitioned Pope Eugenius IV for the reform of the house (Bassand himself had earlier asked permission to do so from Martin V), his arrival was not greeted positively by either the religious or a portion of the local community, who had been ‘totally transformed by the suggestion of the *conventuales*’: thus he retreated to Rome. One could sympathize with the view of Bassand’s opponents. He might easily have appeared more arrogant than ascetic in coming to seize this monastery and interfere in a society that still felt attached to its community: he had – as confirmed by documentary evidence – worked closely with the papal court prior to arrival and was there ‘by the mandate of Eugenius IV’. He was accompanied indeed by ‘two notable men’ of the curia; he had been elevated by external patronage.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, was he not himself an example of a leader who wished to override the peace and unity of the community in his care? If he managed to make peace with the townspeople, the monks of Aquila received less consideration. Eugenius asked Bassand to ‘adapt, by his providence, the religion and way of life of the brothers towards regular observance’, and he did so vigorously, with the result that the majority of the monks, the *fratres conventuales*, fled.¹⁰⁵

But one must remember that even these aspects tied the French Celestines to the broader religious tastes and attitudes of their time. If strict ascetics were drawn close to the world of elite politics, it was precisely because their asceticism was so attractive amid the perceived upheavals of their age. If

103 ‘Vita Joannis Bassandi’, 878.

104 Ibid., 883–4; confirmation of Eugenius IV (6 March 1444, *Iniunctum nobis*): Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 419–21, shows that he had the assistance of Cypriano, both an abbot of the Observant Benedictine congregation of Santa Giustina de Padua and a papal chamberlain, and Giacomo da Regno, a Dominican theologian, both acting as agents of Eugenius IV. These may be the ‘two notable men’ the *Vita* mentions.

105 ‘Vita Joannis Bassandi’, 883.

the tension between strict 'regular observance' and more flexible paths of reform remained somewhat unresolved among the French Celestines, it was the same at the councils: the decree *Haec sancta* (1415), which proclaimed the inherent authority of the Council of Constance after the flight of the Pisan pope John XXIII, appears as something of a careful compromise between the legal justifications for continuing the Council, preferred by Cardinal Zabarella, and those derived from Gerson's approach.¹⁰⁶ And if the choice over enforcing standards in the name of reform and taking counsel remained unclear, that too was a tension in the reformist milieu outside their walls. The French Celestines were far from alone in supporting certain conciliar ideals (as suggested by the *Vita*) and yet finding in Eugenius IV, who showed himself essentially hostile to meaningful conciliar oversight, a more promising support for their reformist aims than the Council of Basel: one of the greatest conciliar theorists, Nicholas of Cusa (d.1464), would follow a similar path after leaving Basel in May 1437.¹⁰⁷

The tensions in the schema of later medieval reform efforts may help to explain why the age was one where 'multiple options' in religious direction existed: no one plan could please all.¹⁰⁸ But what matters here is that monastic reform could be perceived as an option of the deepest importance and relevance within that world. In their own way, they encapsulated not only the fears, but also the hopes of their age. The conclusion of Bassand's reform at Santa Maria di Collemaggio is one that expresses well the confidence with which such men proceeded: the difficulties the *Vita* alleged only enhanced the glory of the eventual triumph of the French Celestines in creating a reformed monastic community. Following the flight of the *fratres conventuales*, 'by divine provision, seven brothers from France at once entered the monastery through its church, and they were received by the blessed father and the people of Aquila with joy and exultation, with the wrongdoers dismayed and rejected, so that the monastery was totally cleansed of undisciplined brothers and regular observance would remain unimpeded.'¹⁰⁹ Their triumph appeared to stretch beyond monastery walls, uniting and benefitting an external community. At Jean Bassand's funeral, the brothers and the town mourned together, with the famed Observant

106 M. Decaluwé, 'Three Ways to Read the Constance Decree *Haec sancta* (1415)', in *The Church, Councils and Reform*, ed. G. Christianson, T.M. Izbicki and C.M. Bellitto (Washington, DC, 2008), 122–39.

107 Fasolt, *Council and Hierarchy*, 318; J.E. Beichler, 'Nicholas of Cusa and the End of the Conciliar Movement: a humanist crisis of identity', *Church History*, 44 (1975), 5–21.

108 Van Engen, 'Multiple Options', 257–84.

109 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 884.

Franciscan reformer Giovanni da Capestrano, who hailed from the region, giving an oration ‘before two hundred thousand men’.¹¹⁰ In the final lines of the scene, with Bassand lying in state, the community of the living and the dead seem almost united, the people of Aquila and Bassand finally healed from their respective ailments as they came into communion with God’s love:

His kind face seemed as if laughing to the onlookers, his hands remaining supple as if he was not dead, but sleeping: many disabled and infirm people were gathered there, restored to pristine health at the touch of the sacred body.¹¹¹

Here all the quandaries of reform that the *Vita* brings to mind fade into the background of a new monastic dawn, drawing together the French Celestines, other Observants and the laity. As with the other Observant-derived narratives of reform, the *Vita* presents a lionized image of their success that balances the overly unforgiving vision of their enemies.¹¹² But in reality, too, they had been far from alone. They received support from a surprisingly wide range of patrons, including Valois royalty alongside Lancastrian claimants, the Avignon papacy alongside reformist intellectuals like Pierre d’Ailly, Nicolas des Clamanges and Gerson, and countless more modest men and women, especially those of the towns and cities. They even had Italian Celestine supporters: Luca Mellini, a Roman Celestine, came with Bassand to Aquila and acted as prior; the aforementioned Matteo Pizzulo d’Aquila perhaps joined forces while he was there.¹¹³ These benefactors and friends were not entirely united in every aspect of their religious ideals or visions for Christian society. Nevertheless, they all found something relevant in the French Celestines.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 885.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 886.

¹¹² A. Huijbers, “Observance” as Paradigm in Mendicant and Monastic Order Chronicles’, in *Companion to Observant Reform*, ed. Mixson and Roest, 111–43.

¹¹³ Confirmation of Eugenius IV (6 March 1444, *Iniunctum nobis*): Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 419–21.

2. The French Celestine constitutions and their heritage

Statute and spirituality in later medieval monastic reform

On 25 January 1380, the Avignonese pope Clement VII granted independence to the French Celestines from their Italian brethren, in response to the ‘the humble supplications of our dearest son Charles, illustrious king of the French [Charles V], on your behalf’.¹ He granted the French Celestines the right to hold provincial chapters every three years from then on and to elect a new provincial prior each time, in broad terms the same system of government that had been run on a larger scale in the previously united congregation, as will be seen. As mentioned in the introduction, the immediate background to this decision seems straightforward: the Great Western Schism, which had begun a mere sixteen months earlier and in which Clement VII and Charles V were central actors. The letter was somewhat vague about the reality of the Celestines being torn apart by competing papal obediences – it stated that the French Celestines were unable to get to the general chapter across the Alps due to ‘wars’, ‘divisions’ and finally ‘schisms, which alas reign in the sacred Church of God’ – but the real political context is clear enough: the French Celestines, with the support of the French king, were in allegiance to Clement VII, while their Italian brothers supported Urban VI. Nevertheless, the Celestine petition, as recorded by the letter, did not lead with external contingencies, but rather the internal situation of the French province. The loss of temporal goods is mentioned, perhaps a consequence of the risks of travel to the general chapter or the obstruction that the division presented for managing their affairs. But first and foremost among their complaints was that ‘since you lack a legitimate provincial prior at present, *regular observance* does not prevail as it ought to in the order, especially in its French parts’ (my italics). This could also be read as a fairly straightforward reference to the fact that the normal lines of obedience had been disrupted by schism: the Italian abbot chose the French Celestine provincial prior, but if the abbot was obedient to a different pope, then the legitimacy of their provincial prior, Pierre Pocquet, at least from the French standpoint, had to be reaffirmed

¹ Bull of Clement VII (*Sacre vestre religionis observantia*, 25 January 1380): Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 412–14.

– and indeed was. But the reference to ‘regular observance (*observantia regularis*)’ seems more significant.

Earlier mentions of ‘regular observance’ in the order’s history were sparse.² This, however, was the second reference to ‘regular observance’ within the space of a few years found in the French Celestine context. A few years earlier, on 13 February 1377, Charles V had described the French Celestines as ‘brothers under regular observance’ (*sub regulari observantia*) in his foundation charter for his house at Limay-lez-Mantes.³ Moreover, both Clement’s letter and Charles’s charter appear connected with the same Celestine prelate: Pierre Pocquet. Pocquet became provincial prior in 1379 and was also the first provincial prior of the independent congregation from 1380–3: it is almost impossible that the petition to Clement VII did not involve him. He was also the first prior of the house of Mantes, and, as one of twelve religious sent to fill the house, may well have journeyed from Paris alongside Charles V, who attended its dedication on 15 February 1377, two days after the issuing of the charter: given his status within the order and his involvement in the foundation, he may have had some influence over the description of the Celestines it contained.⁴ Most importantly, in the letter of Clement VII, a change of tone is clear. Earlier uses among the Celestines appear more neutral, as per the more traditional use of the term: i.e. following a particular Rule.⁵ In 1380, however, the term seems to be deployed in another style. Here, what seems to have been at stake in the Celestine petition was the quality of ‘regular observance’ – how rigorously it was being enforced, and the particular style of bringing this about. For a working congregational system and the election of a provincial prior was

2 There are three references: John XXII’s confirmation of the privileges of the Celestines speaks in general terms of the papal duty to support religious places that contain ‘persons under regular observance (*personae sub regulari observantia*)’. The constitutional amendments published by the general chapter in 1320, under the abbot Matteo da Salle, employ it in a negative sense against those who wanted longer abbatial terms (they did so ‘*sub velamina regularis observantie*’), most likely referring to the permanent abbatial position in the Benedictine Rule: Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 389. Additionally, in the c.1340 Italian constitutions, a reference is made to novice instructors teaching ‘regular observance’ alongside the ‘Divine Office’: ‘Die ältesten Konstitutionen’: Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 468 (17.3).

3 Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/115, no. 367 (Mantes, foundation charter of Charles V, 13 February 1377): ‘ut fratres inibi sub observantia regulari prefate summe trinitati perpetuum exhibeant famulatum, assiduis et supplicibus intercessionibus apud Deum insistant’. The date written is 13 February 1376; French chancery practice was to begin the new year from Easter, however, hence the date is 1377 when 1 January is taken as the new year.

4 Caudron, ‘Poquet (Pocquet, Pierre)’, 1922; M.T.C. Duplessis, *Description géographique et historique de la haute Normandie* (Paris, 1740), 146.

5 See note 2 of this chapter.

in no way necessary for simple obedience to the Rule of St Benedict; rather, that was a matter of the Celestines' own constitutions, which sat on top of the Rule.

The increasing use of the maxim of 'regular observance' in the context of religious reform and this sort of shift in its meaning were not unique to the Celestines. From the mid-fourteenth century onwards, beginning with Franciscan reformers who demanded strict, more literal observance to the Rule of St Francis, it became the banner for Observants within many orders; for them too it was about the quality of 'regular observance' that mattered, similar to the meaning evoked in the *Vita* of Jean Bassand. Beyond that, it is well known that, just as the Celestines had their constitutions, many 'Observants' had a particular fondness for supplementary legislation. Supplementary legislation was in and of itself, nothing new. Since the early Middle Ages, 'customs (*consuetudines*)' had existed, detailing 'established customs already approved by the normative power of practice within a community or order.'⁶ From the twelfth century, more prescriptive statutes (*statuta*) and constitutions (*constitutiones*) emerged. These were 'in principle drawn up with the consent of an entire community or their representatives, and in the case of entire orders, of a central legislative body': their multiplication thus went hand-in-hand with the kind of general chapters pioneered by the Cistercians.⁷ But what is certainly clear is that the tendency was for reformers of the late medieval period to place ever more emphasis on compilations of prescriptive legislation. Their volume only increased: according to Hallinger, the late medieval period was 'the age of statutes'.⁸ Moreover, the statutes that Observant reformers produced tended to reflect their emphasis on rigour and literalism, providing an exceptional level of practical detail on ascetic and penitential life.⁹

The French Celestines inherited a major set of constitutions from their Italian brothers, dating from c.1340, and even these were certainly not the first constitutions known within the congregation. This said, the independence of the Celestines of France, and the promotion of 'regular observance' that they fostered, coincided with a new period of legislative accretion and consolidation. Significant constitutional additions are recorded as having been created at the chapters of 1380, 1383, 1384, 1387, 1390, 1393, 1399, 1402,

6 Melville, *World of Medieval Monasticism*, 340.

7 Ibid.

8 *Corpus consuetudinem monasticarum*, ed. K Hallinger, 8 vols (Siegburg, 1963), i, pp. xxxvi–xlix.

9 Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors*, 206–11.

1405, 1408, 1414 and 1417.¹⁰ Between 1417 and 1426, moreover, the French Celestines looked to consolidate these changes to maintain clarity. They did this firstly by listing their changes to align chapter by chapter with the Italian constitutions.¹¹ At some point after the concordat of September 1418 that secured their continued self-government, they also produced a new version of the constitutions:¹² its introduction quotes directly from the concordat concerning the right of the French province to hold their own provincial chapter, elect their own provincial prior and ‘make statutes and ordinations for the good standing of the order and the observance of regular discipline (*observantia regularis discipline*)’.¹³ A second recension of the French Celestines’ constitutions was compiled in the mid-fifteenth century, to which further changes were subsequently appended.¹⁴ The period under study thus represented one of significant legislative reform for the province.

The content of these additions will be analysed in the course of this chapter. But it is the significance of the monks’ desire to define matters by legislation that is ultimately at stake in this analysis of the Celestine constitutions. Traditional historiography on monastic life often viewed late medieval

10 Avignon, BM, MS 727, fols 61r–69r; Paris, BA, MS 790, fols 63v–72r. The former version appears to be the strongest contemporary copy, since the latter lacks constitutional additions for 1396 through to 1411; the additions mentioned in the former manuscript from this period are included in the 1383 list of the Paris text, as will be seen. A later, 16th-century listing of provincial chapters – Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1503 – contains a partial listing of statutes for these years, which suggests that the 1383 listing in the Avignon copy also integrated statutes from other years (1380, 1384, 1387, 1390, 1393). As the best contemporary copy, the Avignon manuscript will be the main source of reference for these additions, with alternative dating from both Paris manuscripts cited where necessary.

11 Avignon, BM, MS 727, fols 69r–70v; Paris, BA, MS 790, fols 72r–74v.

12 Sustrac, ‘Les Celestins de France’, 152–4; Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 172. An early draft is found in Paris, BA, MS 789, and is in very rough hand. Avignon, BM, MS 728, represents the earliest clear copy of the updated constitutions. A completed mid-15th-century version, with some further alternations, is found in Paris, BA, MS 791 (dated 1462, see fol. 5r: ‘anno domini m cccc lxi Scriptarum et renovatarum’), and Avignon BM, MSS 729 and 730.

13 Avignon, BM, MS 728, fol. 5v: ‘Verum quia de speciali gratia sacrum generale capitulum religionis nostre videlicet sancti petri confessoris quondam celestini pape quinti supra beati benedicti regulam fundate et per expressam et irrevocabilem constitutionem perpetuis temporibus duraturam nobis fratribus suis in provincia francie et partium eidem adiacentium commorantibus pie concessit: quod vice et auctoritate eiusdem capituli generalis possimus congregare et celebrari provinciale capitulum in dicta provincia et in eadem eligere et statuere provincialem abbatem vices gerentem, et ipsius potestate fungentem, ac eciam in ipso capitulo facere ordinationes et statuta pro bono statu ordinis nostri et observantia regularis discipline sicut viderimus expedire.’

14 This version is found in Paris, BA, MS 791 (dated 1462, see fol. 5r: ‘anno domini m cccc lxi Scriptarum et renovatarum’) and Avignon BM, MSS 729 and 730.

monastic legislation and the reformist emphasis on strict observance in a rather negative light. The prohibitions that reforms promoted have been used to support the historiographical narrative of the decline of later medieval discipline, especially in the case of papal reform efforts, such as those of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and the bull *Summi magistri* (1336) of Benedict XII.¹⁵ More broadly, however, there is a tendency to see the predilection for legislation as a mundane intrusion, at best handling pragmatic institutional necessities, at worst signalling a dulling of spiritual charisma when taken too far. Founding rules have traditionally been seen apart from this, as texts combining practical advice with spiritual inspiration; in this light, modern commentators have sought to safeguard the Cistercian 'return to the Rule' from the accusation of 'literalism'. Late medieval reformers, on the other hand, promoting exact conformity, had fallen victim to exactly that error according to Jean Leclercq.¹⁶ That outlook is beginning to be challenged, however, especially by the latest literature on Observant reform. Conformity to legislation served as a way of creating a *status religiosorum* that was distinct from lay religiosity but which also fed off the growing influence of law in wider society.¹⁷ Alongside this, the spiritual weight of monastic legislation is also beginning to become clearer. There was, as Mixson has suggested, 'an embrace of law and statute [...] which could become almost devotional in tone'.¹⁸ 'Almost' may be underplaying matters, however. A very recent piece of research by Stephan Haering offers a conclusion on the Observant Benedictine legislation among the congregations of Santa Giustina, Melk and Subiaco that demands further consideration: 'it is striking to see how often the reform and new blossoming of monastic life was linked to a new legal approach'.¹⁹ For the Observant French Celestines, there is a case to be made that their constitutions reinforced the walls of their spiritual seclusion as they were drawn ever further into society, while also allowing them to imagine themselves – and perhaps be imagined – as a pinnacle of contemporary Christian social idealism.

15 Knowles, *Christian Monasticism*, 110; Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, ii, 390.

16 A. de Vogüé, *La communauté et l'abbé dans la Règle de saint Benoît* (Bruges, 1961), 10, 123–8; L. Bouyer, *The Cistercian Heritage*, trans. E.A. Livingstone (London, 1958), 5; J. Leclercq, 'S. Bernard et la règle de S. Benoît', in J. Leclercq, *Recueil d'études sur S. Bernard et ses écrits*, 5 vols (Rome, 1962), v, 194.

17 Mixson, 'Observant Reform's Conceptual Frameworks', 67–74.

18 *Ibid.*, 78–9.

19 S. Haering, 'Die Reformen von Santa Giustina in Padua und von Subiaco sowie das Provinzkapitel zu Petershausen in kirchenrechtlicher Perspektive', in *Spätmittelalterliche monastische Reforminitiativen in der benediktinischen Welt*, ed. F.X. Bischoff and M. Thurner (Berlin, 2015), 73.

Purity, danger and the ‘castle of peace’

The legacy of St Peter Celestine

To understand the history of the Celestine constitutions and the attitude towards monastic legislation within the congregation, one must begin with their founder: St Peter Celestine. Peter might not seem a likely origin for such a particular predilection for statute. He had progressed from an orderly Benedictine life at the monastery of Santa Maria in Faifoli²⁰ to live on his own, as a hermit, high in the Abruzzo mountains. Thus, from one aspect, he is an exponent of the charismatic – or even ‘individualistic’ – streak that was so often characteristic of monastic founders: while eremitism was recognized as a legitimate path of religious life, especially for those who had significant experience within the cloister, it offered the opportunity for greater latitude in day-to-day practice.²¹ The early history of the community of followers that formed around him leaves some room for conjecture as to how much of a formal monastic life they were leading, or indeed wanted to lead. In the summer of 1263, the ‘rector’, presumably Peter himself, and ‘hermit brothers’ of the ‘community of the Holy Spirit of Mount Maiella’ petitioned Urban IV to be incorporated into the Benedictine order, having previously been ‘uncommitted to the observance of any order’. While this is presented as a sincere request of the community, and may well have been just that, it is important to recognize that it was also a necessary one. New religious orders had been banned at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, with all new religious communities required to profess an existing rule.²² With Peter himself unable to grant Benedictine profession to others, this petition was crucial to the ongoing existence of his community, however much he or his followers wanted it.²³

The first ‘constitutions’ mentioned by Peter’s earliest *Vita* (the Bollandists’ ‘*Vita C*’),²⁴ dating from between 1303 and 1306, could be

20 *Die ältesten Viten*, 114, cites that he had professed here.

21 G. Constable, ‘Individualism and Institutions in Medieval Religious Communities’, in *Visions of Community in the Pre-modern World*, ed. N. Howe (Notre Dame, 2002), 10–20.

22 *COD*³, 242 (c.13).

23 Becquet, *Gallicae Coelestinorum*, xii–xiii.

24 *Die ältesten Viten*, 103–222. Herde presents both this text and the other earliest documents concerning St Peter Celestine’s life in a modern critical edition. On the dating of *Vita C*, see *ibid.*, 43. See also, ‘S. Pierre Celestin et ses premier biographes’, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 16 (1897), 365–487, at 370–5.

interpreted as his letting go of other founding aspirations, in the interests of his community gaining acceptance as a legitimate Benedictine congregation. The word is first mentioned immediately following Peter's journey to the Second Council of Lyon (1274/5), at which he had sought to gain confirmation of his community's Benedictine status, since he had heard that the Council would reinforce the papal ban on new orders.²⁵ Thereafter, he 'congregated his brothers at the monastery of Santa Maria at Maiella to celebrate a chapter, in order to discuss many good things concerning the observance of the mandates of God, the Rule of blessed Benedict, and other constitutions, which he accomplished with Christ's aid'.²⁶ Of those supplementary constitutions, there is only one recorded in the text: that 'they could take monasteries having property, so that the monks could live by the labour of their hands, as instructed by the Rule of blessed Benedict'.²⁷ From this point onward, there would be no question of semi-eremitic communities: rather their congregation would focus on founding and reforming monasteries along more classical Benedictine lines.

A little later in the text, Peter is described as framing constitutions. This time, far greater detail is given. From describing 'the doctrine which he showed and taught to his brothers by word and example' so that they might 'uphold the virtue [of humility] in body and soul', the discussion leads directly into 'constitutions' established by him.²⁸ Here, an attempt was made to establish a routine of rigorous ascetic self-denial and penitential action that went beyond the Benedictine rule. The text continued: 'Whence, he set in the constitutions that the brothers should dress in the roughest garments that they could find', and 'similarly that they should use unrefined foods, and should delight neither in delicate food nor in soft and delicate clothes, like those who dwelt in the world'.²⁹ He introduced additional periods of special fasting (three 40-day fasts 'with Lenten food' instead of one, adding the 'lent of St Mary (*quadragesima Sancte Marie*)' and the 'lent of the Nativity (*quadragesima Natalis Domini*)', to the 'lent of the Resurrection (*quadragesima Resurrectionis Domini*)'), commanded that the general fast (until the ninth hour) was to be made throughout the year (except in summer, where the brothers were to dine

25 *Die ältesten Viten*, 112–13.

26 *Ibid.*, 112.

27 *Ibid.*, 113.

28 *Ibid.*, 123.

29 *Ibid.*

normally – i.e. at the sixth hour – on Tuesday and Thursday), and restricted wine to Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays.³⁰ Liturgical and penitential endeavours were significantly enhanced from Benedictine standards; they were to say the office of the Virgin, of All Saints and of the Dead as well as the regular office, and perform at least 100 genuflections a day and 200 every Friday and during fasts.³¹ These exacting demands were placed alongside more traditional Benedictine concerns: that brothers should show charity to one another, and that a daily chapter of faults should be held, where the Rule would be read and the brothers would confess faults.³²

These stipulations in fact conform reasonably closely with another list of constitutions purported to have been written or dictated by Peter, but which has only survived in the writings of French Celestine antiquaries.³³ If these latter constitutions should be treated with caution, they have provenance – one copy attests that they were drawn from an original in 1444, coinciding with the French reform work in Italy – and given the paucity of extant manuscripts that have come down to us from the thirteenth and fourteenth century Italian Celestines, it is not necessarily an indictment that they do not survive elsewhere.³⁴ The content of the compilation – a largely disorganized list of ascetic and penitential commands, with only limited information on the government of the congregation – also makes it difficult to believe it would have served much of a practical purpose as a later forgery.³⁵ These records confirm the poverty of their ‘rough garments’, which they were to repair with whatever vile scraps they could find, regardless of colour,³⁶

30 Ibid., 124. It is unclear which feast of St Mary is referred to in the discussion of the additional fasts.

31 Ibid., 123.

32 Ibid., 123–4.

33 Paris, BA, MS 928, fols 107r–144v (anonymous antiquarian collection of the Celestine house of Paris, dated 1532). This copy is cited here, although several other later versions survive: Paris, BA, MS 968, fols 71–109v (anonymous antiquarian collection of the Celestine house of Paris, 16th century); Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 1074, fols 96r–107r (anonymous antiquarian collection of the Celestine house of Paris, 16th century). Avignon, BM, MS 1363, fols 7v–22r (a general history of the order, compiled by Nicolas Malet, a Celestine monk of Avignon, 17th century), reprises the same content, but divided into 107 chapters rather than 140.

34 Avignon, BM, MS 1363, fol. 22r, states that Malet drew his text ‘ab exemplari fratris Philippi Libellavayt, qui testatur anno 1444 se illud extraxisse ab originali propria manu sancti Petri de Murrone scripto.’

35 Sustrac ‘Les Célestins de France’, 145–9, supports the view that these were a creation of the turn of the 14th century from contextual and content evidence.

36 Paris, BA, MS 928, fol. 110v: ‘Vestimenta et indumenta pedum et lecta sicut regula precipit, id est vilia cingula corda, vel lensa. Liceat eis uti cipellis simplicibus et repeciare vestimenta

the additional forty-day fasts,³⁷ and their genuflections.³⁸ In addition there are further constitutions of a similarly precise ascetic, penitential and liturgical bent. Monks were not allowed to eat meat unless gravely infirm (in accordance with the original Rule of St Benedict), but this ban was further extended to include guests.³⁹ Cheese was only to be eaten at most three days per week and wine was now banned altogether except in 'great necessity', going even further than the restriction recorded in *Vita C.*⁴⁰ Even their cutlery was precisely prescribed (it could not be made of metal, unless iron) and napkins were to be kept entirely modest (of 'simple cloth').⁴¹ Dormitories were to be divided into small cells: if they did not go as far as the Carthusian model, they thus preserved a taste of their eremitic origins in a manner reminiscent of the Camaldolese monks. Brothers were not allowed to leave their cells except to go to the church or refectory at the constituted hours, to go to work, or for 'natural necessities', and no one was allowed to enter the cell of another.⁴² The cells were also to be regularly scrutinized by the prior for anything 'peculiar' within (i.e. anything that could thus be interpreted as individual property); Benedictine poverty was thus reinforced by rigorous checks. Scourging was not only given as punishment, but as a regular self-inflicted penitential action: it was to be practised by all the brothers on every Friday from Easter up to the feast of Sts Peter and Paul (29 June), every day from then until the feast of the Assumption (15 August), Wednesday and Friday from then until the feast of the Exaltation of the

de vilibus pannis et diversis coloribus.'

37 Ibid., fol. 110v: 'Tres quadragesime fiant in anno in cibo quadragesimali: scilicet quadragesima maior et sancti martini, et quadragesima sancti petri. Feria quarta et sexta per totum annum fiat sine coto: nisi festum ii lectionibus in eis venerit.' It is notable here that the additional forty-day fasts have been moved to culminate in the feast of St Martin (11 November), and the feast of Saints Peter and Paul (29 June).

38 Ibid., fol. 119v: 'Item de ieiuniis et quadragesimis supradictis et sexta feria per totum annum, centies in die et centies in nocte ad Deum flectant genui, aliis vero diebus quotidie centies inter diem et noctem, diebus dominicis et festis solemnibus non tenentur nisi pro voluntate.'

39 Ibid., fol. 111r: 'De carnibus edendis illius prefragabiliter teneatur quod in quadrimagesima continetur [...] Episcopis vel aliis personis quo non sunt de ordine nostra infra cepta monasterii carnes nullateus ministrantur nisi graviter infirmentur.'

40 Ibid., fols 110v–111r: 'liceat eis omni tempore uti caseo tribus diebus in hebdomada scilicet feria ii, iii, et quinta et omnibus dominicis exceptis quadragesime supradictis et feria quarta et sexta et sabbato et vigiliis sacratis totius anni.'

41 Ibid., fol. 128: 'Cultelli nostri sint simplices et metallum nullum in eis appareat, nisi ferrum. In mappulis vero, nisi listra, et labor alius non videatur, nisi pannus purus.'

42 Ibid., fol. 110: 'Nullus fratrum quibus celle deputate fuerint exeat de cella absque licentia: nisi causa eundi ad ecclesiam in horis constitutis, vel ad laborem, seu ad necessitatem nature [...] Item nullus intret in cellam alterius sine licentia abbatibus: nisi causa grave occasionis.'

Cross (14 September) and every day from then until Easter (with Sundays and certain feasts excepted). Every Friday throughout the year, they were to observe a double round of scourging.⁴³

In both these witnesses, the constitutions are not concerned with making the Celestines fit a Benedictine institutional mould, but rather represent an attempt to add to it and to distinguish the followers of St Peter Celestine from Benedictines of other stripes. These norms still seem at some distance from congregation's origins, however. One could even question whether some of the early followers resented it. Another source, his alleged 'autobiography', purports to take us back to the age when the monks seemingly lived uncommitted to any rule: it may, however, have been compiled by certain followers after his death (by 1306 at the latest).⁴⁴ Here Peter the expansionist monastic reformer and papal saint is essentially lost: the autobiography only details his childhood and spiritual journey to his high hermitage on Mount Maiella. There, he fought a shifting, reactive combat against constant temptations in the world around him. 'Very beautiful women' appeared to block his path in the mountains: 'he could barely free himself from their hands'.⁴⁵ In his vivid dreams, naked women pressed themselves against him and 'fought with him' to get under his clothes: from an early age, 'he greatly feared the night on account of fantasies'.⁴⁶ Amid these troubles, reactive prayer provided the surest protection: 'when he prayed at night, he thence saw two beautiful men on either side of him, clothed as bishops, singing the Mass and, so it seemed, singing psalms with him'.⁴⁷ The right path was often found through miraculous occurrences. For instance, he was once offered a rooster by a matron: he 'responded "I want", like a simple man', but when it did not sing as he had hoped, 'he immediately understood [the wrong] he had done'.⁴⁸

The real Peter is thus somewhat shrouded by divergent narratives, neither of which necessarily tell the full story: *Vita C* describes the early fourteenth-century state of the order as Peter's own work and will, while the autobiography is silent on institutional matters and harks back to a simpler time. They were nevertheless narratives that seem bound together: this is

43 Ibid., fol. 120r: 'A pascha usque ad festum sancti Petri feria sexta tantum in capitulo disciplinam, a dicto festo usque ad Assumptionem sanctae Mariae quotidie, postea vero usque ad exaltationem sancte crucis quarta et sexta feria, deinde usque ad Pascha quotidie exceptis Dominicis et festis duodecim lectionum et feria sexta semper dupliciter disciplinam accipiant.'

44 *Die ältesten Viten*, 67–88. See *ibid.*, 11–24, on the background to this text.

45 *Ibid.*, 74–5.

46 *Ibid.*, 73, 76.

47 *Ibid.*, 76.

48 *Ibid.*

both the case on a codicological level, and at a deeper level, in their highly physical – and, from a modern perspective, rather superstitious – attitudes towards sin and salvation, which formed a shared substrate within these early texts.⁴⁹ Within the alleged earliest Constitutions, one finds reminders of the world of dangerous roosters and corruption manifested in physical contact. Alongside the unusual level of detail over materials – of food, of utensils, of clothing – one finds an interesting constitution concerning punishment. Those convicted of graver faults were not only to live and eat separately from the community, as per Benedictine Rule, but also to have any vessels they used during their period of penance destroyed or given to the poor.⁵⁰ Partly this added to the ostracization and shame for the sinner; from another perspective, however, and especially given the broader precision over the materials used within monastic life, it seems likely that there was an element of superstition concerning physical matter as a conduit of sin, a concern that certainly reared its head among later Observants.⁵¹ All of this raises a question: if one proceeded from a presumption that physical details and precision had such a major impact on monastic purity, was the imposition of such legislation necessarily such an alien or unwelcome intrusion? Physically regimenting one's life could potentially be quite reassuring in this context. The intense repetition of liturgical and penitential actions Peter is said to have set out in their constitutions likewise makes sense from this mindset: why simply pray reactively in the face of so many dangers, when one could find further assurance in multiplying day-to-day observances?

This dynamic is suggested very precisely by another early Celestine text (written by 1306), *De continua conversatione* ('On His Unceasing Routine').⁵² This text set out to describe what its author saw as the most essential aspect of Peter's virtue: 'those things which in each year, month, night, and hour of his life he completed while in possession of a state of health and grace, as well as his cult of divine service and his example of sacred faith and pure religion.'⁵³ The account thus claims to draw together Peter the hermit, Peter the monastic reformer and even Peter the pope. What kept his dream of

49 *Die ältesten Viten*, 1–6, describes how the earliest surviving 14th-century copy features them bound together in a single MS: Vatican, Archivio Storico Vaticano, Archivum Arcis, Armari I–XVIII, no. 3327; they were introduced with the incipit: 'Incipit vita sanctissimi patris, fratris Petri de Murrone seu Celestini pape quinti; inprimis tractatus de vita sua [...]'; after which followed the autobiography.

50 *Ibid.*, fol. 116r: 'Vasa autem quibus utitur aut frangantur aut pauperibus exogentur.'

51 See Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors*, 203–5.

52 *Die ältesten Viten*, 90–101.

53 *Ibid.*, 91.

spiritual purity alive at every point of his religious life? If interior virtues, especially charity, do not pass without mention, it was primarily a routine of physical, repetitive action. His self-denial was punctilious, not allowing himself anything, however small, that he might conceivably take pleasure in and also actively wearing down his body: 'for food, he ate nothing which had flavour, rather only that which sustained him in a state of bodily frailty, and he tempered the amount of water drunk to the fever of his stomach.'⁵⁴ The hair shirts he wore every day were made of 'horse or cow hair', which he himself wove together in 'knotty nets' until the garment was complete, so that they constantly 'afflicted the flesh'.⁵⁵ His nightly routines ran along similar lines, described as a means of 'driving out the debt of nature' and avoiding the dreams that so troubled him in the *Autobiography*: 'He reclined his head on a grate constructed from wood, on which no sort of thatch was added, staying propped up with knees bent, turning many times rather than resting his weary body, and preferring a mattress of bundled twigs or wood, lest having fallen asleep, he might be burdened by any visions. With his body not yet restored by sleep and spurning his bed, he rose to his vigils.'⁵⁶ Once awake, his intense liturgical cycle appears designed to avoid any idleness that might have allowed his body respite, but one can also sense a genuine fervour in a practical repetition with strong penitential qualities. When he rose, he immediately fell 'prostrate on the ground, with knees bent and hands held high', and 'breathed in deeply from heaven'.⁵⁷ After proceeding to say a greatly expanded morning office, including the office of the Virgin, the Dead, and of All Saints, he spent his time reciting the Psalter. Carefully marking how far he had gotten in this by the hour of Prime, he joined his brothers for this office, before saying Mass with much devotion.⁵⁸ Again he resumed the Psalter, interspersed with 'a great number of genuflections, sometimes 300, sometimes 500', all performed with 'flowing tears'.⁵⁹ His pattern – he was always actively doing something – continued throughout the day and even at night. While his brothers slept, he 'occupied himself sweetly throughout the night until daybreak' with yet more genuflections and prayers.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Ibid., 93.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 94–5.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 91.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 92

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 94.

The purpose of *De continua conversatione* was perhaps not solely internal: it accords closely with the testimony of Bartolomeo di Trasacco, an early Celestine, in the canonization proceedings.⁶¹ But that did not mean that it was written solely to please external authorities. If those conducting the process were keen to show him as a man of the Benedictine Rule,⁶² *De continua conversatione* in fact described a formal regimen of sanctity that was far more distinctive and which may have fulfilled an important spiritual purpose within the order itself, smoothing the tension between the Peter of the *Autobiography*, charismatic and reactive, and the Peter of *Vita C*, the careful legislator. One could flee the danger of sin in the physical world by retreating to a mountain top. But one could also avoid the corruption that was seemingly inherent in tempting objects, one's body and even one's dreams through a steadfast practical programme. The institutionalization of the order was still clearly pressed by developing circumstances of a more mundane nature: but the demand for a more precisely regulated life had aspects that appear a very natural fit with what can be gleaned of Peter's early religious charisma. Rather than just a requirement to be dealt with, the ability to take up such norms on a deeply spiritual level was welcomed and celebrated by the writer of *De continua conversatione*. Such patterns were inflexible, but they had freed Peter to bring his sanctity down from the mountains for the good of the world. There was no reason to assume that similar routines could not do the same for his followers.

Looking beyond the cloister, this rigorous, formalist spiritual approach appears to have been well grounded in and appealing to the society that surrounded them. The precise physicality was rooted in the Italian eremitic tradition. For Peter Damian (d.1072/1073), the repression of vices could only be completed 'when the tingling palate is repressed, when the impudent tongue is withdrawn in silence, when the ears are closed to slander, when the eyes cannot gaze on illicit things, when the hand is restrained lest it strike out cruelly, the foot lest it wander inanely.'⁶³ In Peter of Morrone's own time, religious activism emphasizing 'apostolic poverty' would drive

61 *Il processo di canonizzazione di Celestino V*, ed. A. Marini, 2 vols (Florence, 2015–16), i, 78–86.

62 *Ibid.*, i, 90. The second article in fact speaks of 'regular observance'; but here the aim seems to be to show that he was living a proper, Benedictine life, and not outside the terms of the approbation of his congregation. This does not seem likely to have been the source of the French Celestine appropriation of this language, even if it may have strengthened it. They did possess a copy of a portion of the canonization process: Paris, BA, MS 1071, fols 1–33bis v. But this they only made in 1455 from an exemplar found in L'Aquila during their reform work there, according to a note on fol. 33bis v.

63 *PL*, cxlv, 294.

similarly exacting notions concerning the physical things religious used, especially among the Spiritual Franciscans.⁶⁴ Moreover, in Peter's numbered, patterned and repetitive cycles of penitential and liturgical actions, one can sense the powerful late medieval drive towards what has been termed 'counting piety': this was a form of religious expression and practice defined by highly quantified sequences of Masses, prayers and devotions – often seen as arithmetically linked to the diminution of time spent in purgatory – that made its mark as much in secular culture as monastic.⁶⁵ The notarial inquisition of witnesses to Peter's sanctity makes repeated reference to the saint founding not 'monasteries', but 'places of prayer', where 'service was fully and continuously returned to God': if clearly formulaic – it is included in the second article of his proofs of sanctity –, in the informative process the phrase is most commonly cited in the responses of the townspeople of Sulmona who describe Peter's impact on their world.⁶⁶ They were not oblivious to his repetitive routines. Nicolo di Berardo, an artisan of Sulmona, said he saw Peter cure women inhabited by evil spirits through his 'prayers beyond number', while a local woman, Catania, saw her notary husband Giovanni convert to a life of tough religious exercises after being told by Peter to say 'so many Pater Nosters' and perform 'so many genuflections' per day.⁶⁷

The predominance of townspeople and especially the growing 'professional' classes – artisans, medical doctors and legal notaries – among those locals who bore testimony to Peter's sanctity deserves some pause for thought. The Peter they loved was grounded in his ascetic mountaineering, but simultaneously accessible to the hubbub of urban life.⁶⁸ The previous example – that of Peter bequeathing ordered, repetitive spiritual practices – on the one hand suggests that *De continua conversatione* was not an inaccurate impression of how he was able to move closer to the world, to respond to the spiritual needs of others, while remaining both pure in their eyes and true to himself. On the other, it is fascinating that these formulas made a particularly

64 Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*; Burr, *Spiritual Franciscans*, 43–65.

65 T. Lentes, 'Counting Piety in the Late Middle Ages', in *Ordering Medieval Society: perspectives on intellectual and practical modes of shaping social relations*, ed. B. Jussen and P.E. Selwyn (Philadelphia, 2001), 55–91.

66 *Il processo di canonizzazione di Celestino V*, i, 90. For examples of the townspeople, see *ibid.*, ii, 85 (Migliorato di Giovanni di Sulmona), ii, 134 (Giacomo di Giovanni di Daniele dei Sulmona), ii, 138 (Benedetto di Tommaso of Sulmona).

67 *Ibid.*, i, 156, ii, 58.

68 This is also noted in R. Brentano, 'Sulmona Society and the Miracles of Peter of Morrone', in *Monks and Nuns, Saints and Outcasts: religion in medieval society*, ed. S. Farmer and B.W. Rosenwein (Ithaca, 2000), 79–96, at 90–6.

strong mark on a notary, a man whose professional life would have been defined by precision: the model of sanctity that Peter apparently transitioned to – outward, effortful, repetitive – feels well suited to resonate within the world he became so involved in. Catania's husband would by no means be the last man of this class to be attracted to Celestine religion; and as this chapter will make clear, deeper links between legal ideology and Celestine spirituality would also form. What should be acknowledged at this point, however, is that the separation that is sometimes assumed between spiritual charisma and necessary institutionalism, with the accretion of legislation representing primarily the latter, seems flawed within the dynamics that operated in and around the young congregation. Supplementary legislation was not merely taken up for acceptance from concerned Church bodies or to restrain less zealous recruits, but could be imbued with powerful spiritual meaning both to smooth transition within the cloister and embed it within the aspirations of wider religious culture. From what has been seen of the early Celestines, there is every reason to see their constitutional activity as creative or even charismatic, as part of a complex but often deeply spiritual conversation between monks and the world.

The constitutions inherited by the French Celestines

Some eighty-six years had passed since the death of St Peter Celestine when the split between the French and Italian segments of his order came to pass. Since his lifetime, their constitutions had evolved significantly. If the purported constitutions of St Peter Celestine – presuming their early origin – seem closely tied to the ascetic and penitential fervour of the congregation's semi-eremitic roots, the recension of the constitutions dated c.1340 by Borchardt superficially conforms to more prosaic expectations of monastic legislation.⁶⁹ These constitutions are structured in a far more orderly manner: they are grouped into a smaller number of coherent thematic chapters (25 as opposed to over 100 in the earlier lists). They follow a more logical order too, proceeding from the highest level of organization to the finer details of day-to-day life. They begin with congregational governance, including the general chapter held every three years (see below) and visitation (conducted once or twice a year at each house by an abbatial nominee). These are followed by chapters describing the chapter of faults

69 'Die ältesten Konstitutionen': Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 433–501; Paris, BA, MS 790, and Avignon, BM, MS 727, contain this edition, and were both used by Borchardt. See also Sustrac, 'Les Celestins de France', 150–1.

(held either daily or at least three times a week), liturgical duties, the tasks of office-holders and the method of receiving new members. Further on, there is a description of defined faults and requisite penalties, regulations concerning the enclosure of monks, communal property, clothing and food (with many further faults and penalties described) and, at the very conclusion, two chapters on penance and absolution.⁷⁰

The ascetic and penitential discipline these constitutions describe shows some trade-offs in favour of practicality, of the sort that one might expect with growth in numbers and an evolving relationship with external society, especially their benefactors. It should be noted, for instance, that a regulation from the alleged constitutions of Peter's age, banning the building of monasteries in cities, was no longer present; especially outside the Abruzzo, urban houses became more common.⁷¹ Moreover, it was stated that in certain circumstances – if requested by a king or cardinal, or by another lord whom they dared not refuse since 'the damage and scandal would probably be too great (*dampnum et scandalum verisimiliter redundaret*)' – monks were allowed to provide service to a lay or secular master. On the surface, they seem to have strayed quite far from the ideals of their founder here, even if they placed numerous disciplinary safeguards around this measure and restricted the length of service to three years.⁷² As with their earlier constitutions, however, the detailing of their new regulations remains all too fine and the attitude towards enforcement often all too unbending for them to be characterized as the fruits of institutional pragmatism. For instance, the continued refinement of their still very hard-line stipulations on poverty could have caused far more embarrassment to the order than was necessary to make a point to the recalcitrant. Stripping prelates of office for merely possessing something of a penny in value, regardless of excuse, seems liable to have created undue scandal, both within the community and in the eyes of outside society. It was not impossible that they could fail in this by accident, since their use of common property in the course of their duties had to be precisely declared with the depositors, and any discrepancy, even one that might readily be explained by miscalculation or forgetfulness, constituted grounds for punishment.⁷³ There seems to be a partial recognition of this danger in the fact that the line between the

70 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 219–49, provides a strong topic-by-topic account of the daily life defined by these constitutions.

71 Ibid., 118.

72 'Die ältesten Konstitutionen', 488–9 (c.21.7).

73 Ibid., 482–3 (c.20).

levior culpa compound of punishment and penance (public castigation in the chapter, penances according to the Rule and the subtraction of wine for a period multiplied according to the value of the goods), and that of *gravior culpa* (which added imprisonment, with the sinner placed in irons and clamps) was stated at a somewhat higher value of property for prelates than for other monks (3 tari in cash or 6 tari in goods, rather than 1 carlino in cash or 1 taro in goods).⁷⁴ But in any case, 'proprietors' could still not be trusted in the care of souls, regardless of the amount they had possessed. Elsewhere, the constitutions appear to respond to the desire of *Summi magistri* (1336), aimed at other Benedictines, to provide for education for monks. But that papal bull had called for monks to be sent to universities: the Celestines, on the other hand, only allowed for the creation of 'schools of grammar, dialectic, philosophy, music, theology and canon law in *our religion within houses and monasteries deemed suitable for it*' (my italics).⁷⁵ Here, something which in another context was found respectable – and indeed might have added to the Celestines' own public esteem in certain quarters – was found unacceptable. It was clearly not because they did not want their monks to be educated, to judge by the constitution in question. Nevertheless, they would simply not allow for monks to be so exposed in the world like this. Such was the natural consequence of what remained a very strict set of constitutions on stability, that banned even short, licensed journeys without significant necessity and the company of other brothers. Imprisonment and, in the case of priors, disqualification from holding any future office were mandated as punishments for illicit journeys.⁷⁶

Such strictures can only be fully explained through the continuance of their founder's deep-seated fear of near unavoidable corruption in contact with worldly things. The particular physicality of their punishments, especially the strict imprisonment in irons and clamps for *gravior culpa* offences, likewise suggests both a heightened concern over the transmission of sin through human contact and the pre-eminent importance of bodily castigation for purifying one's intentions, as much as any simple desire to strike fear into the hearts of the recalcitrant. The regular bouts of scourging regardless of fault found in the earlier constitutions remained extensive and vigorous; their form was now made more precise, applied every day in Lent and Advent and Fridays throughout the year. They were to be performed

74 Ibid., 470–1 (c.18.1–2). A *taro* and *carlino* were, respectively, gold and silver coins struck in the Kingdom of Naples.

75 Ibid., 462 (c.15.10); *Bullarium Romanum*, ed. L. Tomasetti, 24 vols (Turin, 1857–72), iv, 358–60.

76 'Die ältesten Konstitutionen', 477–82 (c.19).

with ‘many sticks, tightly bound together’.⁷⁷ If the founder’s almost superstitious insistence on genuflections was greatly toned down – three are now instructed upon every entry to Mass – punishments were now fixed in a more precise manner according to the fault: their duration and severity were accurately defined and in serious cases they could not always be commuted by the abbot.⁷⁸

Elsewhere, the strictures on food and clothing were well maintained and even enhanced in parts. The former might seem to have been ever so slightly sweetened: wine was no longer banned (although it remained the first thing to be removed when faults occurred), and one of the extra forty-day fasts was removed.⁷⁹ On the other hand, the ban on meat was reinforced, and a single instance could now be punished by a month of *levior culpa* if proved against the monk, beyond the bread-and-water punishment imposed by their earlier constitutions.⁸⁰ Regarding clothing, the new constitutions seem to show more concern for external respectability. The cheapest possible materials were still to be sought, but the use of scraps of various colours was no longer recommended, and their habit – a white tunic, grey scapular and cowl – was fixed very precisely.⁸¹ In introducing this new, tightened code on clothing, the compilers describe how experience had taught that ‘monks abuse many unconceded things under the dark disguise of concessions’, and indeed that the common property of monasteries had been depleted through this.⁸² But the statutes themselves suggest that these ‘unconceded things’ were sometimes barely noticeable, such as the height of boots (not beyond the knee), and the extent of their lacing.⁸³ To the Celestines, small disparities in such areas were now placed in the same category as finery, presumably since they envisioned that monks could still take undue pride in their appearance through even these little things: all such ‘unconceded things’ brought with them the breach of the ‘monastic proposition’, and the constitutions thus aimed to stop ‘danger to the souls of the brothers’ through precise practical and physical injunctions.⁸⁴ Elsewhere, a similar

77 Ibid., 500–1 (c.25.5).

78 Ibid., 456, 499 (cc.15.1, 25.2–3).

79 Ibid., 492 (c.22.3). Forty-day fasts were now observed in Lent and before Christmas.

80 Ibid., 492 (c.22.4); Paris, BA, MS 928, fol. 111r: ‘Qui contravenerit quot dies tot in pane et aqua comedat.’

81 Ibid., 485–7 (c.21.1–4).

82 Ibid., 486 (c.21.1): ‘quia tamen, sicut experientia docuit per multorum ambitionem improbatam et importunitatem extentam, per quas sub concessorum palliatione fuscata non concessis plurimum abutuntur et rebus temporalibus damnum ingeritur et monachalis propositio contrahitur.’

83 Ibid., 487 (c.21.4).

84 Ibid., 486 (c.21.1).

logic concerning the interior importance of precise common action appears to be at the root of new details concerning the liturgy. The level of devotion due from the monks during worship was defined in highly practical and physical terms, down to the manner in which they should walk in church ('modestly, not swiftly').⁸⁵ Creating a palpable, shared atmosphere of peace and devotion was seen as a necessity: 'there should be a quiet conduct, pleasing to God, peaceful in appearance, which should not only instruct, but edify, rebuild, and shape those reflecting upon it.' Outward manner was here linked explicitly to interior reform.⁸⁶ Elsewhere, regarding the maintenance of silence, the principle is reiterated more generally: 'outward acts are the ornaments of the interior'.⁸⁷

Overall, these constitutions not only bear witness to the institutionalization of the order, but also to the further development of a rigorous, proactive concern for ascetic purity which still burnt brightly. They retain the purpose that they possessed in the Celestines' early history: as the congregation grew and was drawn closer to society, for every compromise, new legislative defences were built. Underlying this, one can also sense a complex intertwining of the highly physical, almost superstitious asceticism of their founder with a more orthodox and intellectually coherent attitude towards monastic purity and sin, founded on interior disposition and conscience, so familiar from twelfth-century monasticism.⁸⁸ The latter attitude may have stemmed in part from their greater emphasis on education and perhaps helped to justify the elements of greater flexibility and practicality described. On the other hand, within the context of inherited Celestine ascetic style, emphasizing inner disposition often worked to enhance their physical scrupulosity in innovative ways, as the potential for interior corruption could be found in interactions that previously seemed innocuous (e.g. the height of boots). The greater exactitude in common life and devotion that they came to demand doubtless responded to the experience of growth in numbers and of reforming existing monasteries, but also seems to have been underpinned by this rigorous spiritual impulse. In translating the interior lessons of classical monastic piety into outward, physical and yet still spiritually defining measures, they in fact prefigured a trend that has also been witnessed among fifteenth-century German Benedictine Observants.⁸⁹

85 Ibid., 456 (c.15.1): 'non currendo ambulent sed modeste.'

86 Ibid., 456 (c.15.1): 'Sit in eis quieta conversatio deo grata, insipientibus placida, que considerantes non solum instruat, sed edifice, reficiat et conformet.'

87 Ibid., 476 (c.18.15).

88 G. Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1996), 269–70.

89 Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors*, 205–12.

These constitutions also erected a complex system of authority within the order. By the time of the Italian constitutions of c.1340, the Celestines had come to possess a system in which the abbot-general of Santo Spirito del Morrone – by then the only abbot in the order, the superiors of houses being priors – was elected every three years at the general chapter of the congregation. The outgoing abbot-general was ineligible for immediate re-election at the end of his tenure.⁹⁰ Moreover, his visitor-general was also made ineligible, as well as anyone ‘from the same land, city or district [...] or who is from the same village, castle or hamlet from which the abbot renouncing at this time should descend or related to him by blood or marriage’. Anyone who supported the nomination of a man related to the outgoing abbot in any of these ways was to face *ipso facto* excommunication and be imprisoned for a year.⁹¹ The procedure around general chapter elections was also clarified. In the election of the abbot-general, the priors and the provincial priors of each of the provinces (Abruzzo, Terre di Lavoro, Apulia, Campagna Romana, Lombardy and France) represented one block of voters;⁹² their voices were to be balanced by those of up to two electors (*discreti*), elected by individual convents (or in the case of Lombardy and France, provincial chapters held for this purpose) without the presence of their prior, who was told to exit the chapter at the point of their election.⁹³ Also elected at the general chapter were the visitor priors, who were tasked with visiting (and judging) the abbot-general. These priors – those of Mount Maiella, Aquila (Collemaggio), and Isernia (all in the Abruzzo province) – were chosen by the five ‘seniors’ of the congregation. These ‘seniors’ had themselves been elected by the priors and convents of the same three houses along with those of Mount Morrone in the Abruzzo province and Naples in the Terra di Lavoro province (one each, although their choice could not be a monk from their own house).⁹⁴ Finally, with both the abbot and the visitor priors

90 ‘Die ältesten Konstitutionen’, 437, 447 (cc.1, 9).

91 Ibid., 447 (c.9).

92 Ibid., 443, 450 (cc.6, 11).

93 Ibid., 441, 442–3 (cc.4, 5). Regarding the number of *discreti* that could be elected, a sliding scale operated depending on the class of house, which took into account historical precedence and, albeit to a lesser degree, size. For houses of the highest rank – *monasteria* –, one priest brother and one not in orders would be elected. For the second rank of houses – *loci conventuales* (usually more recent foundations) – containing twelve or more monks, one priest brother was elected. For the lowest rank, both *loci conventuales* with less than twelve brothers, or *loci non conventuales* (dependent priories or very small foundations), only the prior would come: the brothers of these houses nevertheless participated in the election of *discreti* at the nearest *monasterium*. See Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 187.

94 ‘Die ältesten Konstitutionen’, 438–9, 445 (cc.5, 7).

elected, all the other priors and the visitor-general resigned their offices; the incoming abbot would then choose either to restore or replace them.⁹⁵ Overall, the system had parallels with that operated by the Carthusians, where all officials renounced their positions at every chapter general (in their case yearly);⁹⁶ banning the re-election of the sitting abbot-general, however, was unprecedented.

This structure evolved gradually. In 1294, their founder (as Celestine V) issued a bull detailing a system of government that required the abbot-general to step down every three years at a general chapter (at that time, owing to the smaller size of the congregation, still held yearly), and be either re-elected or replaced by the participants, who were defined as the 'co-abbots, prelates, and brothers' of the young congregation.⁹⁷ In 1304, Benedict XI approved the visitation of the abbot-general by the priors of Mount Maiella, Aquila and Isernia, an idea inherited from Cistercian practice, where there were four abbots charged with visiting Cîteaux, albeit in that context they were elected for life by their convents.⁹⁸ The most innovative aspect of their system was imposed sixteen years later. The abbot-general Matteo da Salle, following his election in 1320, ordered that abbot-generals should not be eligible for re-election for nine years after completing a term of office; this gap was reduced to three years by John XXII in his confirmation of the new arrangements. The same new constitutions introduced the measures barring the previous visitor-general from being elected as abbot-general and clarified the aforementioned election procedures for the seniors of the congregation and those priors who were to visit the abbot-general. Moreover, by this time, it appears that there were no abbots of other monasteries, merely priors, and that the system of sending *discreti* to the general chapters had been introduced.⁹⁹

In these updates, a certain balancing of interests can be sensed which doubtless related to internecine politics. If the central power of the abbot-general was enhanced by the demotion of other superiors to the rank of prior, the abbatial office itself became checked and limited in a manner that was, at this time, unheard of in the Benedictine tradition due to the limits on tenure. The result ultimately seems to provide little for either the power of the congregation's prelates or the independence of houses or provinces.

95 Ibid., 449 (c.10).

96 Cygler, *Das Generalkapitel*, 259–60.

97 Bull of Celestine V (*Etsi cunctos*, 27 September 1294): Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 377–8.

98 Cygler, *Das Generalkapitel*, 44.

99 Ordinances of Matteo da Salle, 18 May 1320: Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 387–93.

Geographically the houses of the Abruzzo held a somewhat outsized power due to the number of *monasterium* houses – the highest rank of house within the congregation, defined as much by the date of joining the congregation as size – that could send the maximum two *discreti* and their dominance in visitor-prior elections, important for later events, but the possibility of any one prelate or faction maintaining long-term power was nevertheless rendered incredibly difficult.¹⁰⁰

Influences of another sort seem critical here: an ideology that cast grave suspicion over the potential corruption of prelates provided at the very least a critical framing for such debates. This most likely drew from the renunciatory legacy of St Peter Celestine himself, but in a manner that developed over time. In *Vita C*, the holding of office is described primarily as a ‘burden’ that drew Peter away from the practical ascetic exercises and continual prayer through which he maintained his purity: he is said to have had a wooden cell built for him for the purpose, shortly before his abdication of the papacy.¹⁰¹ He had earlier taken the same path within his own order, standing down from active leadership, again citing the burden as too great, especially for one so old. He wished to continue to help his brothers but wanted to purify himself before death by redoubling his ascetic and penitential efforts.¹⁰² A few decades thereafter, however, the potential for corruption while holding office is brought out more clearly in a manner that is not mentioned in *Vita C* or in Peter Celestine’s own bull regarding congregational government. The general chapter of 1320, under the abbot-general Matteo da Salle, would state it clearly: their banning of the immediate re-election of the abbot-general was weighed against the ‘temptations’ suggested by the ‘enemies of mankind’ who might ‘in the spirit of ambition, want to preside over the temporal direction’ of the order. The re-election of an abbot-general, however, had in fact only occurred twice in the order’s history, and on both occasions, only one extra term was achieved.¹⁰³ One of these instances did occur directly before Matteo’s reign. But while his statutes may have responded to some measure of distaste for the leadership of his two-term predecessor, Matteo da Comino, the fact that he and his reformist supporters took a measure that could render their own direction of the order more unstable attests to the fact that these constitutions were about ideology as much as internecine politics.

100 See Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 118, on the distinction between *monasteria* and the other houses of the congregation (*loci*).

101 *Die ältesten Viten*, 142–3.

102 *Ibid.*, 125–31.

103 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 371.

Deeply felt spiritual logics concerning the incursion of sin, again combining the hyper-ascetic legacy of their founder with a more intellectual, but still pessimistic, outlook on temptation, appear to have framed and perhaps even driven the creation of constitutional bulwarks. The matter of how constitutions were to be made likewise makes this clear. Constitutions were not to be alterable at the whim of any abbot or sectional interest. In the purported earliest constitutions, the head abbot would pick seven men, 'with the council of the brothers', to serve as *diffinitores*,¹⁰⁴ who would produce conclusions to their discussions which the abbot was obliged to assent to and could not add to except in the 'littlest things'.¹⁰⁵ By the c.1340 constitutions, further safeguards were added: prior to the election of the abbot-general (which took place on the second day of the general chapter), eight *diffinitores* were appointed by a committee of six (three chosen by the abbot, three the most popular choices among the rest of the chapter) to stand alongside the renouncing abbot and (after his election) the new abbot, to hear the depositions of the chapter members.¹⁰⁶ Based on these, their decisions were published on the final day of the chapter.¹⁰⁷

When held alongside what has been seen previously, an impression is reinforced: not only constitutions, but also constitutional procedure, stood in the way of the spiritual dangers that office-holding brought with it. Theoretically, at least, the Celestines now possessed a system of monastic government with these ideals to the fore. This, however, seems to have raised an issue for an order that had grown rapidly, across new regions and into new, less secluded social environments. If these constitutions provided little support for any factional interests, these interests inevitably still existed. The result was that, rather than their constitutions being updated to reflect new challenges, they were at times just overridden. Davide da Montitilie would serve two consecutive terms as abbot-general from 1340 to 1346; so did Giovanni della Torre d'Aquila, who was elected both in 1349 and 1352.¹⁰⁸ These incidents – for which, sadly, the background remains somewhat obscure – coincided with the start of a period of disorder among the Italian Celestines.¹⁰⁹ Violence apparently occurred at the 1360 chapter general in an argument between the

104 Paris, BA, MS 928, fol. 121v: 'Abbas autem cum consilio fratrum eligat septem de melioribus ordinis qui cum ipso abbate diffiniant omnia proposita in capitulo generale.'

105 Ibid.: 'Abbas qui presidet non debet dare sententiam in capitulo generale sine consilio priorum et monachorum, nisi in minimis rebus.'

106 'Die ältesten Konstitutionen', 446 (c.8).

107 Ibid.

108 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 272–3.

109 Ibid., 117–18.

brothers of the Abruzzo region and those from the other Italian provinces. Later, the same rivalry resulted in the rapid election of a new abbot-general in February 1367 following the death of Ruggero da Monte Ferrato. Held in midwinter, treacherous for travel, the refusal to attend of certain priors of the Terra di Lavora and Campagna sparked a conflict along the order's most obvious fault-line, the power of the Abruzzo province: it resulted in the excommunication of some of the protesters. The appellants campaigned for the creation of new provincial visitor priors to sit alongside those of Mount Maiella, Aquila and Isernia in Abruzzo and for the general chapters to be rotated through the provinces. The Abruzzo brothers appear to have won this battle over the course of ten years, with the election of their candidate to abbot-general, Tommaso de Roccavalleoscura, in 1376.¹¹⁰

The French Celestine vision of purity: urban extremism

The conflict within the Italian order occurred at a time when the leadership of the province was taking on a 'French' character. The seventeenth-century Celestine historian Nicolas Malet records that Robert de Bordes, the first known provincial prior of French origin, was chosen for that position at the contested chapter of 1360 and again in 1369, but was also retained in 1370 at a chapter held in Aversa dominated by the rebels, at which he was present.¹¹¹ The next recorded provincial, however, was an Abruzzo brother, Francesco della Torre, from Aquila (1375 or possibly 1376). In 1377, a certain Petrus Fontanus took over, of whom we do not know the national origin. Later antiquarian tradition holds that, despite the Schism having already begun, Pierre Pocquet's elevation in 1379 was at the order of the Italian abbot-general, Raimondo da Napoli, elected in August that year.¹¹² But it is also said that the preceding abbot-general, the aforesaid Tommaso a Roccavalleoscura, had attempted to conduct a visitation in the province in 1379: the need for this might suggest that a measure of separatism had already taken hold.¹¹³ How much they were involved in the internecine struggles of their Italian

110 Ibid., 119–22.

111 Ludovico Zanotti, *Regesti*, iii.1, 51; Avignon, BM, MS 1438, fol. 46r; according to Malet, however, he was briefly deposed in 1371 by the visitor-general, following the complaint of Jean de Nongento, whom Robert had previously deposed as prior of Paris due to a certain fault. Robert was nevertheless reinstated by the abbot-general shortly afterwards, when the crime of Jean became known.

112 Avignon, BM, MS 1439, 200: 'de instituto generalis abbatis anno 1379 Gallice provincialis nominatus est.'

113 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 126; Aurélien, *La vie admirable*, 202–3.

brothers is unclear, but it may well have enhanced the appetite within the French province for greater control over their own affairs.

Whatever their views on their Abruzzo brothers, there were major differences in the circumstances of their existence: these ultimately prove crucial to understanding both the French emphasis on 'regular observance' and the legislative accretions that accompanied it. On the one hand, the French Celestines were a very much smaller, more tight-knit body, able to assure their growth entirely through the foundation of new houses until their reform work in Italy. If this spared them contact with the unreformed, on the other hand, it meant that the environments they occupied were shaped more by their benefactors' needs than their own. Only their first two houses, Ambert (in the forest of Orléans) and Mont-de-Châtres (in the forest of Compiègne, 'on the peak of a little mountain') truly appear similar to St Peter Celestine's original isolated ideal.¹¹⁴ It quickly became more common to build houses close to or alongside symbols of lay power. Offémont (1331, founded by Jean de Nesles, lord of Offémont),¹¹⁵ Ternes (1338, by Roger le Fort, bishop of Limoges),¹¹⁶ Gentilly, near Sorgues (1356, by Cardinal Annibaldo Ceccano),¹¹⁷ Colombier (1361, by Cardinal Pierre de Colombier)¹¹⁸ and Marcoussis (1404, by Jean de Montaigu, *grand maître de France* under Charles VI) were all founded either adjoining or within existing residences built or inherited by their founders.¹¹⁹ Even more marked, however, was the move towards more or less urban foundations. Mantes (1377, by Charles V)¹²⁰ and Villeneuve-lez-Soissons (1390, by Enguerrand de Coucy)¹²¹ were situated on busy river routes just across the water from important

114 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 28, 66.

115 Ibid., 78. The antiquary states that the house was situated beneath Jean's castle.

116 Ibid., 259.

117 Ibid., 115. The antiquary comments that the house is situated 'proche la petite ville et rivière de Sorgues à deux lieues d'Avignon et dont l'Eglise avoit été par le Cardinal de Cécen (qui l'avoit fait bâtir) consacrée à Dieu sous l'invocation de St Martial'.

118 Ibid., 126 (Testament of Pierre de Colombier, 1361): 'constituo et ordino quod in et de castro meo de Columbariis viennensis Diocesis per me constructum, fiat, erigatur, construat'ur; see also ibid., 131, for further details provided by the antiquary.

119 Ibid., 265 (foundation charter, 21 May 1406): 'assez pres du chastel et parc dudit lieu'; V.A. Malte-Brun, *Histoire de Marcoussis: de ses seigneurs et de son monastère* (Paris, 1867), 47.

120 Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/115, no. 367 (foundation charter, February 1377): 'in loco qui dicitur Carriera Beati Albini de Limayo prope Meduntam'. On the Carrière St-Aubin, see P. Lefébure, 'Le monastère des Célestins de Limay', *Mémoires de la Société historique et archéologique de l'arrondissement de Pontoise et du Vexin*, 44 (1935), 93–116, at 94–5.

121 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 231 (foundation charter, 25 April 1390): 'au lieu et en la place de nostre maison de ville neuve emprez Soissons'; B. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: the calamitous fourteenth century* (New York, 1978), 385.

urban centres. Paris (1352, founded by the prominent bourgeois Garnier Marcel and the College of Notaries and Secretaries of the King, enhanced by Charles V),¹²² Sens (1366, by Isabelle Bilouard, a bourgeois widow),¹²³ Metz (1370, by Bertrand le Hongre, a local notable),¹²⁴ Amiens (1392, by Charles VI),¹²⁵ Avignon (1393, by Clement VII),¹²⁶ Lyon (1407, by Amadeo VIII, duke of Savoy),¹²⁷ Vichy (1403, by Louis II, duke of Bourbon)¹²⁸ and Rouen (1430, by John, duke of Bedford, then regent of the France, completed by Charles VII in 1449)¹²⁹ were all firmly within cities. At some, their relationships with benefactors rendered the walls more permeable: the College of Notaries and Secretaries of the King were allowed to convene regularly at the Paris house from foundation onwards.¹³⁰ At Lyon, meanwhile, the founder, Amadeo VIII, duke of Savoy, negotiated the right to lodge at the house with his male entourage whenever he visited the city, albeit that he promised that 'nothing should be done against the Rule and constitutions of the congregation'.¹³¹

Such a divergence with the social circumstances of their Abruzzo monasteries makes it tempting to see 'regular observance', at least in its ascetic connotations, as something of a fiction. Borchardt has characterized the asceticism of the French reformers as somewhat lightened in places, as a consequence of the urban, elite-supported nature of their monasteries, and the concomitant higher social status of their recruits.¹³² It is true that by 1462, their constitutions would allow for the four tunics each monk possessed to be replaced by two *iaqueta* (heavier overgarments), and also permitted scapulars to be made from a wool-linen blend (*burellum*), rather

122 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 86 (foundation charter, 10 November 1352): 'pres de l'hotel du Reverend Pere en Dieu Monseigneur le Archevesque de Sens'; this area would now be described as the Marais. See Chapter 5, 214–15, for more on its location.

123 Ibid., 141 (confirmation by Guillaume, archbishop of Sens, of donation made by Isabelle Bilouard of Jean de Mézières's chapel and four *chapellenies* to the Celestines, 1 June 1366): 'in nostre civitate Senonensi'.

124 Chazan, 'Le couvent des Célestins de Metz'.

125 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 211. The antiquary states that while the house was originally planned just outside the walls, near the Saint-Firmin gate, it was eventually completed within the town itself on the Rue Saint-Pierre due to concerns over marauding armies.

126 Ibid., 264; Comte, 'Les Célestins du Midi', 178–9.

127 A. Pericaud, *Les Célestins de Lyon* (Lyon, 1840), 14.

128 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 280 (foundation charter, April 1410).

129 C. de Beaurepaire and J. des Essars, 'Fondations pieuses du duc de Bedford à Rouen', *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes*, 34 (1873), 343–86.

130 A. Lapeyre and R. Scheurer, *Les notaires et secrétaires du roi sous les regnes de Louis XI, Charles VIII et Louis XII*, 2 vols (Paris, 1978), i, 13.

131 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 294–5 (foundation charter, 1407).

132 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 242, 249.

than just wool as the Italian constitutions had demanded.¹³³ Later, in 1471, an additional day of feasting was allowed on the first day of the provincial chapter and a slight weakening of the fasting requirements on the Fridays of Lent (except Good Friday) was granted.¹³⁴

It is of course correct to say that their social setting could engender contradictions with the rigorous ascetic ideal they inherited. This will be discussed more in the next chapter, but a few examples emerge in the constitutions where the French provincial chapter had clearly reacted to obviously secular behaviour. For instance, it would surely have been clear enough, given the weight of Celestine tradition, that trying to gain ecclesiastical or lay advancement and offices for family members (1408) was hardly ideal monastic conduct.¹³⁵ In the same year, it was decreed 'that priors and other brothers of our religion should be careful and attentive to the deposits of other religious or any seculars whatsoever that are to be received and conserved' and that 'they should not by any means receive them without the knowledge and will of the *sanior pars* of the community.' This was despite the fact that any misuse of such money would have already constituted theft and, in the case of individual receipt without the knowledge of the community, property.¹³⁶

What was happening, however, was more complex than a change from a tough Italian ascetic ideal to a French world of status and ease. More often than not, the French Celestines in fact became more detailed and absolutist in the creation of tougher constitutional bulwarks against the outside world: pragmatism and practicality seem to have been secondary considerations. The influence of Pierre Pocquet, the apparent architect of

133 Ibid., 242; Paris, BA, MS 791, fol. 50r: 'Permittitur tamen fratribus quod habeant iaquetas dupplices loco alterius quatuor tunicarum: si voluerint et eis indiguerint. Scapulare de burella vel panno griseo magis ad nigrum quam ad album colorem accedens: modicum brevius quam tunica, et usque ad humeros latum, cum capucio trium palinorum de canna de filo eiusdem coloris simpliciter sutum.' Avignon, BM, MS 728, fol. 44, has the addition concerning the scapulars, but does not contain the grant of the *iaqueta*. The exact date of the latter addition is unknown.

134 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 235.

135 Avignon, BM, MS 727, fol. 65v: 'Item quod nullus ordinis nostri cuiuscumque conditionis, dignitatis, officii vel status existat a summo pontifice seu quavis alia persona ecclesiastica vel seculari pro parentibus seu consanguineis vel quibusvis personis aliis secularibus vel ecclesiasticis aliquod beneficium sive officium ecclesiasticum vel seculare aliquatenus impetrare presumat seu aliis quomodolibet procurare. Contrarium vero facientes arbitrio maiorum suorum puniantur.' This same constitution is included in the 1383 list of constitutions in Paris, BA, MS 790, fol. 66.

136 Avignon, BM, MS 727, fol. 66r: 'Item quod priores et fratres ceteri religionis nostre ad deposita religiosorum aliorum seu secularium quorumcumque recipienda et conservanda cauti et attenti existant nec ipsa sine scitu et voluntate sanioris partis conventus quomodolibet recipiant.' This same constitution is included in the 1383 list of constitutions in Paris, BA, MS 790, fol. 66.

'regular observance', appears to have been critical in defining the direction of the congregation here. One of their very earliest additions – from either 1380 (Pierre Pocquet confirmed as provincial prior) or 1383 (Pierre Pocquet outgoing, Robert de Bordes succeeding) – is particularly instructive in this regard: from then on, only unmarried men could join as oblates.¹³⁷ In the constitutions attributed to the age of St Peter Celestine, oblates are described as simple associates of the order who helped them with their external necessities.¹³⁸ In the c.1340 constitutions, they are still assigned that role: but by then, they had also become a class of tertiaries – promising only obedience – that could include both married men and women, doubtless a way of tying devout supporters and potential benefactors to the order.¹³⁹ The French Celestines shifted away from that purpose, asking that those who assisted them in their needs become more like the monks themselves, a transformation that the provincial chapter would push repeatedly in these years. The oblate habit was more strictly specified in 1402 (Pierre Guerot outgoing, Pierre Prudhomme succeeding) than ever before, and they were to make profession in writing too, promising conversion of morals, stability, chastity, obedience and poverty.¹⁴⁰ As such, the spiritual promises they made were weightier than oblates and lay brothers in other Benedictine environments, including Cistercian lay brothers, who only vowed obedience. In 1405 (Pierre Prudhomme outgoing, Besonce Devaux succeeding), it was stated that the congregation should show even further caution in the reception of oblates, their probation period being increased from one year to two.¹⁴¹

Pocquet's shadow also lurks over other scrupulous additions. Returning to the first French Celestine constitutional additions (1380 or 1383), a restriction was created on the reception of perpetual foundation Masses: they could

137 Avignon, BM, MS 727, fol. 62r: 'Item quod uxorati non recipiantur pro oblati nec mulieres quecumque ad religionem nostram.' Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1503, fol. 6v, dates this to 1380, rather than 1383 as per the contemporary lists.

138 Paris, BA, MS 928, fol. 109v: 'Et id quodlibet monasterium habeat mandatarios sive procuratores oblatos cum scapulari qui eant pro necessariis.'

139 'Die ältesten Konstitutionen', 468, 482 (17.4, 19.11)

140 Avignon, BM, MS 727, fol. 65r: 'Item quod oblate de cetero proficentes faciant professionem in scriptis, promittendo conversionem morum suorum, stabilitatem, castitatem, obedienciam et paupertatem.' This same constitution is in the list for 1383 in Paris, BA, MS 790, fol. 65r. Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1503, fol. 6v, dates the change in vows to 1393, rather than 1402 as in the Avignon manuscript.

141 Avignon, BM, MS 727, fol. 65r: 'Item quod oblato de cetero venientes sint in probatione per duos annos quibus elapsis si velint facere professionem faciant eam in capitulo et in scriptis, promittendo sicut in alio capitulo fuerat ordinatum; et dicatur veni creator spiritus sine nota cum oratione de santo spiritu tantum, et si deliquerint puniantur secundum qualitatem delicti et condicionem persone ad arbitrium maiorum suorum in caritate.' This same constitution is in the list for 1383 in Paris, BA, MS 790, fol. 65r.

not be received without the licence of the provincial prior or his vicar.¹⁴² These were fundamental to the culture of later medieval benefaction, but nevertheless appear to have raised moral difficulties for the monks: the French Celestines went as far as to ask Jean Gerson whether they constituted simony.¹⁴³ In 1399 (Pocquet outgoing, Pierre Guerot succeeding), the concession of the Italian constitutions that granted brothers entry into the service of royalty, cardinals and other lords was overturned. A previously tightly controlled system – which featured very heavy punishments for abuse, and which likewise may have helped to tie in potential benefactors – was overturned in favour of an absolute ban.¹⁴⁴

Later constitutions suggest a particularly cautious outlook on the quality of men within French Celestine enclosures. In 1417 (Simon Bonhomme outgoing, Jean Bassand succeeding), it was stated that a man who had been denied profession by one monastery could never be professed at another without the consultation of the prior and the convent that had earlier dealt with him, and that all those who were seeking profession should be carefully interrogated on whether they had ever previously tried to make profession.¹⁴⁵ In 1438 (Jean Bassand outgoing, Simon Trouvé succeeding), it was commanded ‘that illegitimate brothers should not easily be promoted to a position with responsibility for the care of souls, even if they should have dispensation’, despite the fact that ecclesiastical dispensations for illegitimate men to take orders were common practice elsewhere and that men of noble lineages, who had the most reason to send their illegitimate sons to monasteries, do not appear to have had them frequently professed among the Celestines.¹⁴⁶ If not an absolute ban,

¹⁴² Avignon, BM, MS 727, fol. 62v: ‘Item ordinatum fuit quod nullus prior seu conventus possint de cetero recipere onus missarum perpetuo celebrandarum nisi cum licentia provincialis vel eius vicarii.’ Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1503, fol. 6v, dates this to 1380, rather than 1383 as per the contemporary lists.

¹⁴³ See Chapter 4, 204–205.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 64r: ‘Item quod provincialis non possit de cetero concedere alicui domino quavis esset de regalibus aut de cardinalibus quemcumque fratrem ordinis ad sibi serviendum in quocumque officio sive spirituali sive temporalis, non obstante constitutione antiqua in contrarium facta.’ This same constitution is in the list for 1383 in Paris, BA, MS 790, fol. 65r.

¹⁴⁵ Avignon, BM, MS 727, fol. 67v: ‘Si quis ad probationem vel professionem in aliquo monasterio nostre religionis refutatus fuerit, in alio monasterio eiusdem ordinis non recipiatur: donec consilium prioris et conventus qui ipsum recipere noluerint super hoc primitus requiratur et habeatur. Recipiendus insuper quilibet, a recipiente inter interrogationes solitas de hoc interrogetur.’ Paris, BA, MS 790, fol. 68v.

¹⁴⁶ Paris, BA, MS 791, fol. 71v: ‘sub quo fuit ordinatum quod fratres illegitimi non faciliter promoveantur ad officia curam animarum habentia, eciam si dispensacionem habuerint.’ See the Introduction on the social mix of recruits.

the heightened concern over allowing men born out of wedlock to take up such positions suggests a heightened scrupulosity over the spiritual consequences of doing so.

As time went on, the constitutions concerning property in monastic life were not only well maintained but made tougher. Some of these additions seem primarily concerned with the more mundane aspects of financial management and security. The provincial was to present an account of the goods reserved to the congregation and their use in his tenure (1432, Simon Trouvé outgoing, Jean Bassand succeeding). This was supported by a further admonition that ‘provincials should be cautious in the distribution of the money of the province and of visitation’.¹⁴⁷ Money given to monasteries for the purchase of rents was not to be used for other purposes without the provincial prior’s permission and priors were to seek the counsel of the brothers before constructing new buildings or cutting down fruit-bearing trees (1432).¹⁴⁸ With other similar constitutions, however, strong spiritual concerns over the use of common property can be detected. For instance, while the command that ‘from now our books should not be made superfluously illuminated from the expenses of our order, to wit, with gold letters, images and similar things’ (1414, Jean Bassand outgoing, Simon Bonhomme succeeding) seems tied to financial circumstances in its proclamation (‘the expenses of the order’),¹⁴⁹ by the time it was included within the body of the constitutions – it is present in the 1462 edition –, its placement and wording had come to take on a more scrupulous tone. Attached before it is a new injunction that ‘sumptuous or curious’ works should not be undertaken in their monasteries at all, replacing an earlier restriction banning works of a value of more than five ounces of gold without abbatial licence. A moral emphasis against superfluity with Cistercian parallels was thus created, rather than at best implying such through spending controls. Similarly, within the constitution concerning books itself, alongside the concern over expenditure, one finds another new stipulation: such illuminations were not to be created ‘from the expenses of the order *or by the brothers*’

147 Paris, BA, MS 791, fol. 71r: ‘Sub quo ordinatum fuit quod provinciales caute se habeant in distributione pecuniarum provincie et visitationis. Ita quod eas non distribuant in notabile dampnum eiusdem provincie.’

148 Ibid.: ‘Item quod priores et alii non leviter faciant succidi arbores maxime fructiferas: Sed in talibus habeant consilium expertorum. Similiter nec diruant antiqua edificia leviter vel construant nova que sint ponderis sine consilio fratrum.’

149 Paris, BA, MS 790, fol. 67v: ‘Item in libris nostris expensis ordinis deinceps non fiant illuminatione superflue videlicet littere auree, ymagines et similia.’

(my italics). In this interpretation, the diminution of common property was only part of the concern: the desire was as much to stop the brothers from seeking out fine things.¹⁵⁰

All told, such attitudes again appear tied, on a spiritual level, to a rigorous and often rather pessimistic analysis of the incursion of sin. The French Celestines continued to refine the work of their Italian brothers, rather than rejecting it, but took into account the new 'threats' of the higher-status world in which they were placed. In the process, they became even more precise in their attitude towards those matters that remained in their control. A less hidebound and perhaps more intellectual attitude did, however, come to the fore when it came to the purification of sinners. The first constitution listed among the 1380/1383 additions removed sentences of excommunication, interdict and suspension previously imposed by their Italian constitutions that were not in accordance with canon law.¹⁵¹ In the same list, a constitution that allowed the provincial prior – albeit still with the counsel of 'some God-fearing brothers' – to absolve cases previously reserved to the general chapter was introduced.¹⁵² Nevertheless, wherever they could still hope to find spiritual security in fixed and repeated actions, both penitential and liturgical, they did. They were less flexible than their Italian brothers over the necessity of penitential scourging in Lent and Advent. Whereas the Italian constitutions simply stated that those with a 'manifest cause' could say a series of Pater Nosters instead, the French Celestines threatened such men with embarrassment: anyone who did not

150 Paris, BA, MS 791, fol. 12r: 'Opera quoque nimium sumptuosa seu etiam curiosa in eisdem locis acquirendis et etiam iam acquisitis: nec etiam in libris illuminature superflue ut baculi et ymages expensis ordinis vel per fratres eiusdem nullatenus fiant.' In the earlier draft of the French Celestine constitutions (1421–6), the addition concerning manuscript illuminations does not appear, but the ban on sumptuous and curious works is already in place; see Avignon, BM, MS 728, fol. 11r: 'Opera quoque sumptuosa multum seu nimis curiosa in eisdem locis acquirendis et in aliis iam acquisitis nullatenus fiant.' See 'Die ältesten Konstitutionen', 444 (c.7), for the earlier constitution limiting expenditure on building works.

151 Avignon, BM, MS 727, fol. 61r–v: 'Primo fuerunt ibidem sublate omnes sententie excommunicationis interdicti et suspensionis late in constitutionibus nostris que non sunt de iure canonici et alie pene spirituales. Loco earum punientur delinquentes corporalibus penis ad arbitrium maioris sui ubi pena corporalis non esset in constitutione limitata.' This MS lists the constitution under 1383. A late 16th-century attempt to refine a list of chapter-general actions, which seems to draw from documents that no longer survive, attributes the constitution to 1380. Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1503, fol. 6v.

152 Avignon, BM, MS 727, fols 61v–62r: 'Item quod provincialis et vicarius suus de consilio aliquorum fratrum deum timentium possint pro isto triennio illa facere que requirunt consensum capitula generalis in absolutionibus et similibus.'

accept discipline had to state his reason before all within the chapter (1399).¹⁵³ Precisions reinforcing their liturgical observances abounded. In 1396 they enhanced liturgical commemorations following the death of oblates,¹⁵⁴ while in 1414 they enhanced the regular office of the dead celebrated in all monasteries to include further remembrances for the same class: the same men whose ascetic purity the French Celestines were so concerned for were to be prayed for with ever greater ardour.¹⁵⁵ Alongside this constitutional work, they made a whole host of upgrades to the calendar and to the wording of antiphons at their chapters.¹⁵⁶ The Avignon copy of the first complete French Celestine edition of their constitutions appended a 'Ceremonial', setting out precisely when brothers should stand, when they should sign the cross, when they should kneel and so on.¹⁵⁷ This practice was continued in later constitutional recensions at both Paris and Avignon. Their work here seems bizarrely detailed to the modern eyes, but makes sense in view of the belief, already seen in Italian constitutions, that the inner efficacy of their Masses and offices was enhanced by the right physical atmosphere.

The rigorous character of the constitutions can thus hardly be said to have waned in this period. Rather, the French Celestines restated it forcefully in a manner appropriate to their social context. Their key reformers made efforts to pronounce its rigours to their monks in other forms. The most widely disseminated work of spiritual instruction within the province was Pierre Pocquet's *Orationarium in vita Domini nostri Jesu Christi et de suffragiis sanctorum* (written at some point between 1378 and 1391).¹⁵⁸ This

153 Ibid., fol. 64r: 'Item qui non acceperit disciplinam in conventu post matutinas temporibus quadragesimarum nativitatis domini et pasche teneatur se accusare in capitulo vel dicere causam quare omiserit, exceptis hiis qui habent continuum causam excusacione.' This same constitution is in the list for 1383 in Paris, BA, MS 790, fol. 64v.

154 Ibid., fol. 63v: 'Item quod amodo pro quolibet oblato in gratia ordinis decedent fiat officium sicut pro uno fratre in monasterio suo. Videlicet officium in conventu, tres misse celebrande per quemlibet sacerdotem, duo psalteria legenda per clericos non sacerdotes et pater noster per conversos et oblatos iuxta tenorem constitutionum antiquarum.'

155 Paris, BA, MS 790, fol. 67v: 'Primo quod pro oblati in gratia ordinis et fratrum decedentibus fiat officium in omnibus monasteriis nostris sicut moris est fieri pro fratribus decentibus.'

156 See Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 229–30;

157 Avignon, BM, MS 728, fols 54r–59v.

158 It is present in at least five extant manuscripts of certain Celestine provenance: Paris, BnF, MSS lat. 3633 (15th century, Celestines of Gentilly), lat. 18206 (late 14th century, Celestines of Paris – appears to be the earliest Celestine copy), lat. 18330 (16th century, Celestines of Paris); Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 519 (15th century, Celestines of Paris); Chicago, Newberry Library, Case MS 37.5 (early 15th century, Celestines of Amiens). The 18th-century library catalogue of the province (Paris, BnF, MS fr. 15290) lists six copies in their possession at that point: three from Paris, one from Amiens, one from Offémont, and one from Marcoussis. Caudron, 'Pocquet

highly original work in the *vita Christi* genre was not without subtlety and complexity. Nevertheless, the effective founder of the French Celestines still found ample space within it to promote ascetic scrupulosity. In a prayer provided especially for men of the religious estate, he expanded the gospel descriptions of discipleship in a rather harsh manner: he claimed that only those who not only 'mortified the will' but also 'afflicted their bodies' were the truest disciples of Christ. This statement was interwoven with Christ's scriptural injunctions to his disciples – to deny themselves, to give away their property to the poor and to love him more than family (Matt. 10: 37–8; 19: 21; Lk. 9: 23) – as if it were one of them, rather than an interpretive addition.¹⁵⁹ For Pocquet, sin and its avoidance had a very physical aspect and he employed the most tangible images to discuss impurity, as witnessed in his discussion of the beatitude 'Blessed are the clean of heart' (Matt. 5: 8). 'Chastity and temperance by which the mind is purged and clarified' created a state where 'a man does not think of the things of the world, but desires eternal things with all his heart'; nothing impeded this cleanliness more than the 'stench of lust', since 'the lustful man cannot have clean thoughts'.¹⁶⁰

Other Celestine leaders followed his lead. Simon Bonhomme (d.1427), who held the provincial office twice in 1411–4 and 1417–20, found similar ground for ascetic exhortation in his own, far shorter *Meditationes* on Christ and the saints. His meditation on monks exhorted his readers that they 'should be lovers of sacred poverty, possessing nothing of [their] own', and 'should martyr [their] bodies in vigils, in fasts, and other labours beyond measure.' Religious men were to seek safety in 'the prison of the cloister'.¹⁶¹

(Pocquet, Pierre), 1925, states that the work was produced between 1378 and 1389. The origin of Caudron's date *ante quem* is unclear, but it was certainly produced in the Schism (see Chapter 5, 248–9) and had been transmitted to Saint-Denis by 1391. See also Lamy, 'Pierre Poquet', 398–9, 401–2. See Chapter 5 on external transmission. Paris, BnF, MS 18206, will be used for referencing, given that it appears to be the earliest Celestine copy. Caudron cites it as 'probably original'.

¹⁵⁹ Paris, BnF, MS 18206, fol. 54v: 'O pie Jesu, tocius religionis ordinator et fundator qui te perfecte sequi volentibus viam angustam, et artam per quam itur ad viam exemplo et verbo ostendisti, dicens, nisi quis renuntiaverit omnibus que possidet et reliquerit patrem et matrem et omnes propinquos et carnales amices, adhuc aut, nisi seipsum abnegarverit per mortificationem voluntatis et afflictionem corporis, et tollat crucem suam te sequendo non potest esse discipulus meus.'

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., fol. 50r: 'Aliomodo, sumitur pro castitate et temperancia, qua mens purgatur et clarificatur, ad videndum deum, quando hominis non cogitat que sunt mundi sed toto corde eterna desiderat, et per amorem deum amplectitur quousque possit eum videre, quem tamen plus videt. Istam autem plus impedit mundiciam fetor luxurie quam aliquid aliud, quia luxuriosus mundas cogitationes habere non potest.'

¹⁶¹ Simon Bonhomme, 'Meditationes', ed. A. Thibaut, 130–46 of 'Les méditations d'un Célestin du XV^e siècle', *Revue du Moyen Âge latin*, 7 (1951), 123–46, at 140–1. The only extant manuscript of this text is now found in the monastery of Clervaux in Luxembourg and bears an *ex libris*

Later, Jean Bertauld would echo similar tones in an undated letter. He told a young novice who thought of leaving that the outside world was a 'sea of dangerous waves', 'a profound darkness', 'a sty of filth' from which he must remain separate.¹⁶² For him too, the body was the enemy, since the sentiments of the flesh were too dominant; God's grace would not act for those who did not beat it down.¹⁶³

These writers related this ardent ascetic outlook in part to failings within the monastic world. Bonhomme looked to a general 'monastic order', which he saw as 'now almost lapsed', the sort of criticism that would be echoed by countless other contemporary Observants.¹⁶⁴ Pocquet, meanwhile, perhaps showed the most self-consciousness, ending the previously cited 'prayer for religious' with a lament: 'Alas, we have not served you well.'¹⁶⁵ Pocquet's work, however, ultimately draws us back to their social and cultural context in a different way to the ascetic loosening suggested by Borchardt. For the man who seemingly inaugurated their stress on 'regular observance', comments on monastic 'decline' were greatly outweighed by those concerning the parlous state of the wider Church. His discussion of Jesus throwing the money changers out of the temple launched into an attack on simony, relating these biblical sinners to those 'who sell and buy benefices in the Church', before focusing on the Great Western Schism (1378–1417). Here, he blamed a greed within Christian society that again manifested itself in a highly physical and tangible manner: 'And in every part men do not cease to pollute you [the Church] by simonies, luxuries, robberies, pomps, drunkenness and all types of vices, enduring in nothing for you.'¹⁶⁶ Again and again, on no less than six further occasions, he turned back to the state of the current, divided Church and the causes of its downfall.¹⁶⁷ In another tribute to the

from the Metz house, with which Bonhomme was closely associated. See A. Thibaut, in *ibid.*, 123–30.

162 Paris, BA, MS 1071, fol. 38r: 'Cur anchora tue mentis in certo non figitur, dum maris huius periculosi sint fluctus noctisque profunde caligine tenebrescant. Iam tua ratis evaserat stillam feliciter ad portus tranquilla meabat et videbare quasi tutus in budis, sed behemoth ille perversus pervertit cor tuum ut quasi sus immunda revertaris ad volutabrum luti a quo segregatus huc veneras.'

163 Gadby, 'Les Célestins en France', 281–2.

164 Bonhomme, 'Meditationes', 142.

165 Paris, BnF, MS 18206, fol. 54v: 'Sed heu, non bene servavimus.'

166 *Ibid.*, fol. 69v: 'Et in omni parte symoniis, luxuriis, latrociniis, pompis, ebrietatibus, et omni genere viciorum maculare non cessant, in nullo tibi compacientes.'

167 *Ibid.*, fols 102v–103r (on the division of Christ's garments), fols 124v–125r (on Peter being given governance of the Church), fols 147v–148r (prayers to the apostles), fol. 149r (prayer to the evangelists), fol. 150v (prayer to martyrs) and fol. 151r (prayer to confessors).

apostles, the same men whose asceticism he praised, he contrasted their lives with the current state of a Church riven by 'schism' as well as 'falsehoods, lies, deceits and murders', all 'disguised under the label of "the utility of the Church"'. Between these disasters, the same essentially ascetic failings were brought out not only in terms of capital sins but also their physical marks: 'pride, luxuries, greed, revelries, drunkenness'.¹⁶⁸ If the French Celestines were more connected to the affairs of the world by their social position, this also seems to have given Pocquet a sense of ascetic mission in the early period of their independence.

A wider dynamic can be envisaged similar to that already witnessed in the early years of the Italian congregation: ascetic and penitential constitutions again appear to represent part of a complex, but deeply spiritual conversation with the wider world. The French Celestines were indeed drawn into a more urban and connected world in no small part because their reputation for ascetic purity and liturgical endeavour had significant appeal for their benefactors.¹⁶⁹ As their congregation expanded, keeping up this appearance in spite of new social contexts would surely have been necessary to maintaining that appeal. But just as their values found relevance in the world, in turn the Celestine response to their environment was clearly more than pragmatic. The coherence of the constitutional work that accompanied their stress on 'regular observance' attests to a strategy for the spiritual safety of monks that elevated the role of monastic legislation yet further. Writing to his novice correspondent, Jean Bertauld described monastic life as a 'castle of peace and regular, regulating *militia*', cornered by the world and its dangers.¹⁷⁰ From the evidence seen here, the French Celestines continued down the path of understanding their spiritual defences in legislative terms.

The equation of spiritual safety with cautious, fixed ascetic standards helps us to understand how the writer of the *Vita* of Jean Bassand had come to see some of their Italian brothers at Aquila as so dissolute and failing in 'regular observance' despite so many similarities and continuities. The French Celestines reacted to their new social circumstances and connection to affairs with new constitutional safeguards that may have seemed less necessary in

168 Ibid., fol. 147v: 'Sed ve ve ve, propter peccata nostra et patrum nostrorum, nunc perditur scismatibus superbiis, luxuriis, avariciis, comessacionibus, ebrietatibus, falsitatibus, mendaciis, simulacionibus, homicidiis sub colore utilitatis ecclesie palliatis et omnium criminum enormitatibus'.

169 See Chapters 4 and 5.

170 Paris, BA, MS 1071, fol. 38r: '[...] delinquere cupiens castrum pacis regularemque militiam regendi, contendas ad tuos'. Bertauld enhanced the language of military service (*militia*) found in the Rule: see below, 102.

the order's early and more remote monasteries. Differing regional needs for spiritual safety may also partly explain the earlier division between the Abruzzo and other Italian provinces: it is interesting to note that Bassand's reform efforts were assisted by a Roman Celestine, Luca Mellini, an heir perhaps to the earlier provincial rebels, who joined his house to their congregation.¹⁷¹ Karl Borchardt's conclusion that the French 'Observants' were not in fact more classically austere than their Abruzzo brethren remains valid, especially when viewed from afar. But the French Celestines' talk of stricter observance should not be taken lightly. Their needs were different, but they were deeply serious and truly in touch with the ascetic mood of their times. Once the fine differences in outlook between the French and Italian Celestines were framed within their constitutions, moreover, they seem to have become a dividing line between the pure and impure that rendered mutual understanding more difficult. This was perhaps all the more so given that their constitutions were elevated onto the spiritual plane through other means.

Reform, law and the perfection of community

Man's divine likeness

The constitutions inherited by the independent French Celestines (those stemming from c.1340) began with the following introduction:

Man, made in the likeness of God, ought to reform himself on account of Him in a newness of spirit, having fallen away from the everlasting grace of this state through sin. In the shape of this divine likeness, the Catholic Church, spread across the world, is known by three marks. Whenever anything in it is determined, there is either the authority of the scriptures, universal tradition, or certain special, individual usages. And it is constrained by the authority of the scriptures; it is taught by universal tradition; and truly by private constitutions and individual usages, just as they have judged appropriate for the variety of places and times, each group [within it] is governed and subsists.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 135–8.

¹⁷² 'Die ältesten Konstitutionen', 436: 'Homo ad similitudinem dei factus illi se debet in sui novitate spiritus reformare, a cuius perhempni gratia per peccatum noscitur corruiisse. In cuiusquidem divine similitudinis specie catholica ecclesia per orbem diffusa tribus modis probatur existere: cum quidquid in ea cernitur, aut est scripturarum auctoritas aut universalis traditio aut certe propria institutio singularis. Sed auctoritate scripturarum constringitur,

The first sentence, while an original construction, evokes the medieval idea of 'reform' that first emerged in the patristic era: 'the idea of free, intentional and ever perfectible, multiple, prolonged and ever repeated efforts by man to reassert and augment values pre-existent in the spiritual-material compound of the world'.¹⁷³ The opening claim of the constitutions summarizes the ideological root of this thought: that man was 'made in the likeness of God', a belief derived from Genesis (1: 26–7). Man's likeness with God had been damaged by the fall ('having fallen away from the everlasting grace of this state through sin'), but could be and should be renewed; the Holy Spirit made it possible, but man could participate in this process through his own efforts, by drawing from and building on the underlying divine aspect of his nature. Thus man 'ought to *reform himself* in a newness of spirit'.

The following sentence of the introduction makes clear that 'reform' was not just an individual obligation, but one that encompassed man's communities: the Church operated 'in the shape of this divine likeness'. Through these introductory words, the writer/writers in fact reframed an extract of Boethius's *De fide catholica* found in Gratian's *Decretum* (where it is miscredited to Augustine) with their own summation of the idea of reform.¹⁷⁴ If this extract – which begins from 'the catholic Church [...]' – discusses how the Church operated, the Celestines added a reason why. The 'supra-individual force' of reform ideology was active here in full force, carrying with it an optimism over what could be perfected not only within the qualities of man, but also within his society.¹⁷⁵

The resulting conception of 'private constitutions and individual usages' brought the 'newness of spirit' and the positivity regarding the Christian community together. Such constitutions were not necessarily set in stone: they could vary with the 'variety of places and times'; and yet it was still through these that each group within the Church would be 'ruled', and through these, together with the scriptures and the universal tradition on which they were built, that Christian communities would be reformed. Seen like this, something as seemingly mundane as a set of monastic constitutions was elevated to a level where it governed an important portion of the path towards perfection for a group of monks.

universali traditione docetur, privatis vero constitutionibus et propriis institutionibus unaqueque gens pro locorum varietate ac temporum prout cuique visum est, regitur et subsistit.'

173 Ladner, *Idea of Reform*, 35.

174 *Decretum*, D. 11, c.8; Boethius, 'De fide catholica', in *The Theological Tractates; The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. H.F. Stewart, E.K. Rand and S.J. Tester (Cambridge, MA, 1973), 52–71, at 70.

175 Ladner, *Idea of Reform*, 35.

Such ideas arguably had long roots. The thought that spiritual regeneration might be found in relatively definable and repeatable ‘good works’ – thus bridging the gap between the idea of reform and monastic legislation – is expressed in the Rule of St Benedict: for Benedict, those ‘good works’ were also to be brought forth in the ‘workshop’ of community.¹⁷⁶ Here too, monks who professed were to understand the Rule as the ‘law under which they desire to combat (*Ecce lex sub qua militare vis*)’, a phrase reminiscent of Benedict’s opening exhortation for his monks ‘to fight for Christ the king (*Domino Christo vero regi militaturus*)’.¹⁷⁷ The written quality of this ‘law’, albeit new, also served to contrast Benedict’s monks with the Sarabites, who were not ‘tried by any rule’: they took ‘their own desires and pleasures as their laws’, and declared whatever they wished to avoid doing to be ‘unlawful’.¹⁷⁸ But here such allusions sit within an early medieval text that left enormous room for circumstantial human discretion, a discretion that was to be exercised primarily by an abbot who was to act as the father of his community. The Celestine statement on just what their constitutions meant, almost encompassing the practice of ‘reform’ within their specific monastic context, reflected more recent developments most closely.

The referencing and reframing of an extract drawn from Gratian’s *Decretum*, a foundational text of canon law, draws the eye to more contemporary developments in legal culture and scholarship. By the late Middle Ages, the prestige of law in both its canon and civil (Roman) varieties was well established by its proponents on the deepest spiritual and reformist levels. Derived from the ‘natural reason’ granted to man by God, and influenced and perfected by the coming of Christ and his Church – the Holy Spirit was likewise commonly seen as an active inspiration – canon law came to be seen by many of its theorists as a store of mankind’s growth towards virtue.¹⁷⁹ While civil, Roman law represented a second species of law, the two constantly intermingled, and the latter would similarly come to be viewed by its late medieval proponents as ‘the very agency through which the divine power motivates human beings and directs their life in society’.¹⁸⁰ For the Post-Glossator Lucas de Penna (d. c.1390), law represented the ‘translation and realization’ of ‘justice’, a virtue of divine origin that provided a medium

¹⁷⁶ Benedict, *Regula*, 8–9, 14 (cc. 1, 4).

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1, 56 (Prologue, c.58).

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 8 (c.1).

¹⁷⁹ G. Le Bras, *Institutions ecclésiastiques de la Chrétienté médiévale: préliminaires* (Paris, 1959), 117; on the influence of the Holy Spirit, see C. Gallagher, *Canon Law and the Christian Community* (Rome, 1978), 80–1.

¹⁸⁰ Ullman, *Medieval Idea of Law*, 18.

for the perfection of man and his communities: as he quoted from the Old Testament, 'The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth to perfect day' (Prov. 4: 18).¹⁸¹

The complexity of these visions was impressive by Lucas de Penna's time. From one perspective, moderating influences had emerged, especially among canon lawyers. These paralleled theological developments, inspired by Aristotle, that more precisely delineated divine, natural, and positive, human law and which came to identify much of canon law with the latter.¹⁸² Moreover, the notion of 'equity' evolved to be something which could at times lighten the strict rigour of justice. Its meaning became closely associated with the Aristotelian concept of *epikeia*, Christianized in turn as 'justice tempered by the sweetness of mercy': this was a notion that ran parallel to Bernard's understanding of an overriding 'divine law' of charity. For Hostiensis (d.1271), it was for the judge to apply equity in moderating the strict, unswerving justice that all too often tended towards retribution. Other canonists – Giovanni d'Andrea (d.1348) and Giovanni de Legnano (d.1383), for instance – followed suit.¹⁸³ And yet, the whole process of systematizing their work – and aggrandizing its and their own importance – often muddled such distinctions. Hostiensis still frequently conflated positive law, both ecclesiastical and secular, with the divine, despite acknowledging its human creation.¹⁸⁴ Other interpretations of 'equity' evinced greater discomfort in flexible interpretations. Following Aristotle more closely, the theologian Aquinas found that 'equity', again equivalent to *epikeia*, should only be applied where the common good is affected, and if at all possible with the consultation of the legislator.¹⁸⁵ 'Canoncial equity' in turn often appeared as something that could be hypostatized within law, a line of thought which canonists employed to lift their body of law above that of their civil peers.¹⁸⁶ In turn, such ideas also flowed into the work of the latter. For Lucas de Penna, law represented the external form of 'equity' ('*lex est aequitatis forma*'), and above all other mechanisms, its truest interpreter, the primary means through which the harmony and unity of society could be ensured:

181 Ibid., 36.

182 L.B. Pascoe, *Church and Reform: bishops, theologians and canon lawyers in the thought of Pierre d'Ailly (1351–1420)* (Leiden, 2005), 250–4.

183 J. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law* (London, 2013), 155–6.

184 Gallagher, *Canon Law*, 81.

185 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2.96.6; Pascoe, *Jean Gerson*, 66.

186 G. Le Bras, C. Lefebvre and J. Rambaud, *L'âge classique, 1140–1378: sources et théorie du droit, Histoire du droit et des institutions de l'Église en Occident 7* (Paris, 1965), 406–20; Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law*, 61.

at a practical level, he found that the two were essentially identical (*'jus simpliciter sumptum est equitas'*). While he maintained that judges needed to continue to exercise an equitable interpretation, such formulations nevertheless allowed law to appear as if an almost self-contained instrument of divine perfection.¹⁸⁷

There is no space here to delve further into the complexity of academic debate over the nature of law, and its subcategories. The introduction to the Celestine constitutions nevertheless broadly reflects a similar idealism over what written legislation could represent: supported by their conformity with divine and natural law, their constitutions descended from man's divine seed and marked out the path towards the rehabilitation of this quality for the Celestines. While their own constitutions might not have had the same status as the *ius commune* of canon and Roman law, the Celestines still espoused the highest aspirations for what their own legislation might achieve. How might such thoughts have seeped into Celestine monasticism? To an extent, they were present from the very early days of the order, perhaps owing to the support the Celestines found among the professional classes familiar with law. *Vita C* opened with a description that in fact mirrored the logic of the lawyers. Peter's religious life was founded on a desire for the 'observance of God's mandates'. As a result, his primary virtues in the opening paragraphs were not only 'purity', but also 'rectitude (*rectitudinis*)' and 'justice (*iustitia*)'; God lit the 'fire of charity' within Peter as reward for those virtues. Serving the Lord in 'justice and sanctity', mentioned both at the start and the very end of *Vita C*, harked back to Augustinian notions of reform; but in contemporary society, the most natural expression of justice was found in law.¹⁸⁸ The constitutions described in the same text were, in turn, not only for the 'prevention of vice', but for the 'reformation of morals'.¹⁸⁹ In the bull he produced as Celestine V (27 September 1294), which set out the early government of the order and its privileges, notarial rhetoric concerning the reformist associations of law was combined with the flavour of the promulgator's rigorous way of life.¹⁹⁰ The bull was an expression of a 'zeal for a more sincere and stricter charity', a phrase that appears original.¹⁹¹ Charity here was the cause of the bull, but this charity itself was imagined to grow and to be transmitted quite naturally through

187 Ullman, *Medieval Idea of Law*, 42–3.

188 *Die ältesten Viten*, 103–4, 174.

189 *Ibid.*, 124; This language is preserved in 'Die ältesten Konstitutionen', 436.

190 Bull of Celestine V (*Etsi cunctos*, 27 September 1294): Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 377–84

191 *Ibid.*, 378.

legislation: these 'statutes, constitutions, institutes, and ordinances' were created so that 'charity [...] should shine forth in the performance of work'.¹⁹²

Closer to the creation of the c.1340 constitutions, Benedict XII's *Summi magistri* (1336), aimed at the Black Monks, demonstrated this type of reform ideology even more sharply. Observance of 'regular institutions', 'juridical sanctions' and now these new 'statutes' and 'ordinations' was to be pursued so that monks could 'shine forth in a radiance of honesty, excel in regular discipline, and redden with the flames of wisdom and science'; through this legislation 'the firmness of their charity would not weaken'.¹⁹³

The c.1340 constitutions also show that a good level of up-to-date legal knowledge was present among the Celestines. The multiple citations of canon law in the chapter 'on the sentence of excommunication' show that those who wrote it were not only familiar with the *Corpus iuri canonici*, but also with Giovanni d'Andrea's commentary on the *Sextus*, written in the early fourteenth century.¹⁹⁴ The introductions to several chapters also borrowed material from canon law, including quite recent additions.¹⁹⁵ For instance, the chapter on 'sin and punishment' began with a phrase taken from a decree of the Council of Vienne (1311–12) concerning the Franciscan appropriation of houses:

*Wanting to restrain from reckless ventures those whom the rewards of virtue do not induce to observe the law, as much by the increase of penalties enjoined by old law and by fear of those to be added anew, we declare those brothers of our religion who transgress the law and tradition of the Rule and our constitutions, who contravene in any of the following, to be subject to the following penalties. [Italics indicate a quotation of the *Constitutiones Clementinae*.]*¹⁹⁶

The fact that the Celestines were well versed in canon law may have provided another vector for the incursion of an ideology that tied legislation to reform. But how did the Celestines square their heightened concerns over the temptability of man, especially when in office, with a belief that the constitutions they created by their own hand could lead them to better things? Here, their congregational system served another purpose, ensuring that their

192 Ibid.

193 *Bullarium Romanum*, iv, 348

194 'Die ältesten Konstitutionen', 495–8 (24).

195 The following chapters of 'Die ältesten Konstitutionen' borrow an initial sentence from the opening of a canon: 1, Extrav. Jo. XXII 1.1; 2, *Sextus*, 1.6.3; 6, *Decretum*, D. 89, c.9; 13, Clem. 5.1.1; 14, Clem. 3.10.2; 18, Clem. 5.8.3.

196 'Die ältesten Konstitutionen', 470 (18.1); Clem. 5.8.3.

constitutions could be perceived as elevated beyond malign influences and directed towards perfection:

Although our entire religion of St Peter of Morrone, confessor, plainly founded and placed under the Rule of blessed Benedict, should have achieved much up until now by the sacred institutions of the same man, nevertheless, to the honour of God and in the height of reverence for the same blessed Peter, confessor, we the abbots and *diffinitores* of the general chapter of the aforesaid religion, from the will and assent of the same with great deliberation and with the counsel of the wise settling matters, determine certain statutes which pertain to the elucidation of the same Rule, to the curbing of faults and reformation of morals. They should prevail for all time, God willing. We wish and command strictly that all those of our religion – as much the prelate as the subordinate – should observe each and all of the same statutes tenaciously.¹⁹⁷

While there is an acknowledgement here that exceptional individuals like Benedict and St Peter Celestine could formulate ‘sacred institutions’, the Celestine constitutions were now envisaged as far above the power of any individual, since they were promulgated by a general chapter. The legislation they created was to be observed by ‘prelate and subordinate alike’; as seen earlier, the Celestines had indeed gone further than previous Benedictine and Cistercian chapter systems in attempting to make the subjugation of superiors a reality through the tenure limits they created. Moreover, contrasting with the earlier statement that different constitutions were meant for ‘the variety of places and times’, from the perspective of the observer they were to be followed ‘for all time, God willing’. The apparent contradiction between the mutability and permanence of statute is more comprehensible when it is considered that their new laws could be presented as emerging from the observance of existing legislation. They were aimed, at least in part, at ‘the elucidation of the Rule’, but they also resulted from the observance of the congregational chapter system defined by their own constitutions and earlier papal bulls. Seen from this aspect, legislation begat more legislation and, in the Celestine vision, moved their observance increasingly away from the baser aspects of man’s nature by allowing no one exemption from standards that reached towards greater perfection: through their constitutions, they sought not only the ‘curbing of vices’, but the ‘reformation of morals’.

197 ‘Die ältesten Konstitutionen’, 436.

Here it is tempting to cite another source of authority besides that of existing, enabling law: the counsel of the 'wise' and a community acting in unison appears to have been emphasized beyond the influencing role described in Benedictine Rule. The abbot and the *diffinitores* shared the power of assent and capitular discussions were now 'settling' issues. It would perhaps be jumping ahead to see in these relatively vague expressions the same temporal and spiritual power attributed to unities of men that Gerson would promote at the height of the Council of Constance, however. The strongest parallels are found in a contemporary strand of legal thought concerning Church government that gave strength to communal agency and will, but primarily within the context of an elevation of law.¹⁹⁸ The first work that proposed a fully elaborated conciliar supremacy was in fact produced by a canonist: William Durant the Younger's (d.1330) *Tractatus Maior* (1307–11). Durant was in full agreement with the general theory that placed law at the centre of 'reform', but he followed this logic through to the level where it had to be above all: 'if they [the pope and secular rulers] wished to forward this reform, [...] they must govern themselves and the human race according to the contents of the Law [the Old Testament], the Gospel, the councils approved by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and other approved human laws and rights.'¹⁹⁹

Whether the monks of the Italian order had ever read Durant or not, a similar idealism concerning the ability of legislation to structure and relegate the authority of superiors appears to have been beautifully represented at the beginning of a late fourteenth-century copy of this same edition of the constitutions (c.1340) from the Celestine house of Avignon. The introduction to the constitutions ('Man made in the likeness of God [...]') is preceded on the same folio with a miniature of St Peter Celestine's renunciation of the papacy (Fig. 1)

Peter stands to the left of an empty papal throne, but with the accoutrements of papal power placed in an orderly manner upon it. This miniature is rich with potential implications for the meaning of the cult of St Peter Celestine in this period. For instance, it was almost certainly made during the height of the Great Western Schism and in Avignon, and yet it is an image which could have been readily associated with the *via cessionis*, the idea that the end of the division would be found with both competing papal

¹⁹⁸ For the broader development of corporatist legal thought among the canonists, see Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory*.

¹⁹⁹ William Durant the Younger, *De modo generalis concilii celebrandi tractatus* (Lyon, 1531), fol. 4v bis, cited in Fasolt, *Council and Hierarchy*, 132–3.

claimants resigning: the Celestines, as will be seen would openly back this strategy for ending the Schism by the mid-1390s.²⁰⁰ But in its appearance in a manuscript meant primarily for internal dissemination and pertaining to the government of the order, it perhaps also served to bring to life and expand upon the text that followed: the individual man renounced leadership, but authority, the papal office represented by its symbols, lived on, gleaming at the centre of the image. At the level of their own government, perhaps the French Celestines likewise hoped to be ruled by an empty, but enduring, exalted and incorruptible throne. The introduction and the congregational system described thereafter suggests that, perhaps above all, they saw their constitutions and constitutional process as their true vicar.

Among the French Celestines, the shadow of legal culture would only grow. Legal textbooks were certainly present in their libraries from an early stage: for instance, by the late fourteenth century, the Paris Celestines certainly possessed a full volume of the *Decretum* and several commentaries.²⁰¹ But beyond this, anecdotal evidence would suggest that their recruits could hardly have had less contact with legal culture than their Italian brothers. Pierre Pocquet was remembered in the order as a former lawyer whose advice was frequently sought at the Paris Parlement.²⁰² The Parlement took full part in the elevation of law's place within French Christian society, giving law and its ministers a quasi-sacramental authority: its legists defined themselves as 'priests of the king', derived from the ideal of Ulpian that such men should serve as 'priests of justice'. If this might also seem to make them royal partisans, they were so in a manner tempered by their expectation that law and the Christian virtues they perceived behind it were the guiding principles of society. They saw themselves as serving the office, rather than the person of the king: since 'justice never wavers', they did not officially mourn the death of any one king, and placed increasing limits on the Roman legal view of the ruler as above the law (*legibus solutus*).²⁰³ Pocquet himself gave Roman law a spiritual context in the *Orationarium*. It was Pilate's failure to follow it that had ultimately led to the death of Christ: 'Where in the Roman laws did you read that someone could be sentenced to death at the clamour of the mob? Rather, they entirely prohibit this to be done.'²⁰⁴

200 See Chapter 5, 250–1.

201 A. Derolez, 'Fragment d'un catalogue médiéval de la bibliothèque des Célestins de Paris', *Scriptorium*, 40 (1986), 184–201, at 190, 200.

202 Caudron, 'Poquet (Pocquet, Pierre)', 1922.

203 Krynen, 'Droit romain et état monarchique', 22–3.

204 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18206, fols 97v–98r: 'Ubinam in legibus Romanorum legisti ad clamorem populi aliquem esse condemnandum ad mortem. Quin ymo, hoc prohibent fieri omnimodo.'

Certainly, the introduction to the c.1340 constitutions described in the preceding pages retained an ongoing significance for the French Celestines. In the first edition of the constitutions issued by the French Celestines (c.1420), they in fact removed the statement concerning man's divine likeness and the citation of Boethius/Gratian in favour of a simpler introduction that described how they sought 'to follow in the great footsteps of our venerable fathers [...] especially in those things through which the good standing of the order is provided for and the care of souls is looked after' and recited their rights under the concordat with their Italian brothers.²⁰⁵ This was unsurprising since they noted that they were 'abbreviating somewhat' the constitutions they had inherited in order to add new material:²⁰⁶ the long quotations from canon law that introduced chapters 1, 2, 6, 13, 14 and 18 were likewise removed to leave a barer legislative text. But while these latter were lost for good, the c.1340 introduction was never forgotten. Rather, it was restored in the second version of the French Celestine constitutions (dated 1462).²⁰⁷ More than any of the other sectional introductions, that passage, and the connection it drew between the idea of 'reform' and their constitutions, would appear to have meant something very deep to the Celestines, worth stating again and again.

Enforcement and the return of hierarchy

A continued elevation of monastic legislation among the French Celestines also makes sense from the point of view of the ascetic dynamics seen earlier. The French Celestines had lost physical distance from the corruption of the world. Their mountain ranges were no longer the Abruzzo, but could only be those erected by legislation: the higher these peaks could reach on a spiritual plane, the better. Drawing it all together, the sense behind their 'regular observance' now becomes clearer: a tight-knit body, motivated by their new social circumstances but also changed by them, found in emphasizing conformity to legislation a practical and culturally valid answer to challenges

205 Avignon, BM, 728, fol. 5r: 'Venerabilium patrum nostrorum qui nobis exemplum religiose vivendi fuerunt magna cum devotione vestigia sequi cupientes in hiis precipue per que bono statui religionis nostre providetur et animarum saluti consulatur: qualiter id agere deo iuvante valeamus sollicita mente revolvimus.' See above on the text concerning the concordat.

206 Ibid., fol. 5v: 'Statuta quidem per dictum capitulum generale religionis nostre dudum laudabiliter facta et ordinata nunc pro exigencia temporis paululum brevantes, et aliqua dictum capitulum nostrum provinciale fratres ipsius provincie tantum concernentia illis inserentes: unum ex utrisque volumen componendum censimus constitutionum.'

207 Paris, BA, MS 791, fol. 5r.

both old and new, both circumstantial and deeply spiritual. Theoretically at least, it seemed to provide a complete path away from sin, and towards salvation in heaven and the perfection of man on earth.

There seems to have been a corollary to their emphasis on legislation, however, which underlines a key tension inherent within the legal-reformist currents of the later Middle Ages, since it runs counter to the accountability demanded by their constitutions: the strengthening of hierarchical control and the creation of a ruling oligarchy. From 1383 or 1384, the visitor priors, now those of Paris, Ambert, Mont-de-Châtres and Mantes, were to be chosen by the same incoming provincial prior whom they were to visit: the provincial was to act here with the council of 'three god-fearing brothers', but no indication is given of how these were to be chosen.²⁰⁸ Moreover, from 1383, the outgoing provincial had a voice in the election.²⁰⁹ In the same year it was also declared that there would only be one *discretus* sent from each house, regardless of its strength in numbers.²¹⁰ At this point the regime of the outgoing provincial had the numerical advantage at the provincial chapter if its members chose to act in unison.

Although records of the appointments of priors by the provincials are incomplete, especially for the early years of their independence, it is clear that a relatively small number of men shared among themselves the leadership of the French Celestine congregation and that of its most important houses.²¹¹ Pierre Pocquet was the outgoing provincial in 1383, and his replacement was Robert de Bordes: but when Robert de Bordes died only a year into his provinciate, Pocquet was elected again in 1384. From this point on, the dominance of a group surrounding Pocquet becomes particularly obvious. Lambert Rolons, Pocquet's choice as Prior of Ambert (one of the visitor

208 Avignon, BM, MS 727, fol. 63r: 'Item de consilio trium fratrum sacerdotum deum timentum provincialis creet suos visitatores scilecet, de paris, de amberto, de castis et de medunta quos etiam valeat deponere de consilio et consensu conventus vel maioris et sanioris partis illius monasterii cuius prior existeret deponendus.' Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1503, fol. 7, dates this to 1384, rather than 1383 as per the contemporary lists.

209 Avignon, BM, MS 727, fol. 62v: 'provincialis, qui renuntiaverit, habeat vocem in electione successoris.'

210 Avignon, BM, MS 727, fol. 63r: 'Item quod quelibet monasteria conventualia licet non habeat duodecim fratres possint eligere discretum qui comittat vocem suam ad capitulum. Non tamen veniat si sint pauciores octo fratribus.'

211 See Appendix 1. The information on office-holders is derived from Nicolas Malet's 17th-century antiquarian work, Avignon, BM, MS 1438; Nicolas de la Ville's prospographical work of the same century, Avignon, BM, MS 1439, 3–75; and an anonymous 18th-century antiquarian compilation, Paris, BA, MS 5145, 547. The information provided in the next two paragraphs derives from these sources.

priors) in 1384 was provincial in 1387, followed by Pocquet again in 1390, who again picked Lambert as a visitor prior, this time at Mantes. Another one of Pocquet's visitor priors, Jacques le Chien (prior of Mont-de-Châtres), took over the provincial reins in 1393; and Pocquet again took over from him in 1396, restoring Jacques to the same priory of Mont-de-Châtres he had held previously.

Pocquet now seems to have taken something of a back seat in the order, most likely due to his advancing years. Nevertheless, all the provincials from 1399 until his death were men previously favoured by him or his associates. Pierre Guerot (d.1406), provincial in 1399, had only been in the order for four years when Rolons appointed him to the vacant office of prior at Mantes in 1388; following this, Pocquet made him prior of Gentilly in 1391, and both Jacques le Chien (1393) and Pocquet (1396) retained him as prior of the important new foundation of Avignon. In 1402, he was then given the visitor-prior office of Ambert by his successor as provincial prior, Pierre Prudhomme, the latter having been made prior of Sens by Pocquet in 1390 (and perhaps also 1396), and prior of Avignon in 1399 by Guerot, vacating the same office to become provincial. Pierre Prudhomme's successor as provincial in 1405 was Besonce Devaux, a man favoured not only by Prudhomme, but also by Jacques le Chien, Pocquet and Guerot as prior of the mother house of Paris: he was retained in this post between 1393 and 1405. Besonce's successor as provincial in 1408, Simon Bonhomme, had been made prior of Ternes by Pocquet or Rolins in 1387 or 1390, and was apparently maintained as prior of Metz from 1393 until his election as provincial: he was evidently a trusted hand among the ruling elite. He was replaced by Jean Bassand in 1411, who was remembered by his *Vita* as a disciple of Pocquet, and had already been prior of the new royal house of Amiens in 1401 and prior of Paris at some point in the intervening period.²¹²

Bonhomme, moreover, replaced Bassand as provincial in 1414, the latter becoming prior of Avignon; Bassand then replaced Bonhomme in 1417. Besonce Devaux then returned as provincial in 1420, having previously been prior of Ambert (1414), Mantes (1415) and then Paris (1417), all of which were visitor-prior positions. Bassand went to Avignon again as prior in 1420 and then became prior of Paris in 1424 on the death of Besonce Devaux. In 1423, Étienne Coublans was provincial, a man who Bassand had sent to Italy in 1418 to conduct the very important business of negotiating their continued

²¹² The documents cited above do not provide Bassand's name as a prior of Paris before his first provincial reign. This is, however, mentioned in his *Vita*: 'Vita Joannes Bassandi', 879.

independence from the Italian order.²¹³ Bassand would be his successor in 1426: that man would be provincial two more times, in 1432 and 1438, the intervening periods (1429–32 and 1435–8) being filled by men who were closely tied to him, Simon Trouvé and Eudes le Roy, respectively.²¹⁴ Eudes would die shortly after the end of his tenure in 1438, but Simon became the leading light of the province at mid-century, the terminus of this study. He held the provincial office two more times, in 1441 and 1450, the intervening reigns being those of Nicaise le Roy and Pierre Castaing, both of whom appear to have been acolytes of Bassand, and who favoured each other as well as Simon Trouvé in their reigns. In 1414 a provision was made that the new provincial could be from the same region as his predecessors in future: this seems to have been something of a factor in the turnover of provincials. Pocquet (also known as Pierre Bourguignon) was from Arbois in Burgundy,²¹⁵ and his favourites Jean Bassand and Besonce Devaux – who indeed followed one another into the provincial office, Jean in 1417, Besonce in 1420 – were from nearby Besançon (their names both seem to derive from that location).²¹⁶ One might wonder as to how general this Burgundian trend was among the other provincials in this period, but details of their origins are for the most part lacking.

The Italian Celestines chose a system where their constitutions might feasibly encompass all: individual monasteries and priors were weak, but so too was the power of the abbot-general. Their particular alliance of ascetic and legal idealism regarding authority, formed in the early fourteenth century, created issues for the order in the second half of the century, as seen earlier. A theoretical vision of purity and order had the potential to spiral into something more chaotic. For the French Celestines, monastic legislation seems to have demanded strong enforcement, and thus hierarchy. As already seen in the *Vita* of Jean Bassand, strict ‘regular observance’ still entailed regulations that could be applied to all, but it also required trusted enforcers. Such an apparent duality of approach again found strong parallels within contemporary reformist activity. If an emphasis on conformity to legislation at all ranks doubtless helped to reinforce the necessity of corporate approaches – chapter systems were at the heart of the congregations of Melk, Bursfelde and, in their most extreme form, at Santa Giustina, where

213 Avignon, BM, MS 1439, 213.

214 Simon had been made prior of Paris by Bassand in 1426; Eudes had been made prior of Marcoussis by Bassand in the same year.

215 M. Lieberman, ‘Pierre Pocquet: Dictamen de laudibus beati Joseph’, *Cahiers de Joséphologie*, 12 (1964), 1–71, at 5–23.

216 Avignon, BM, MS 1439, 100, 143–7.

the Italian Celestine model was mirrored but with yearly re-elections of the congregational president –, ²¹⁷ the desire to enforce monastic legislation on subordinates and the unreformed could also re-empower superiors. St Colette's reform of the Poor Clares, for instance, emphasized not only the observance of her own set of voluminous constitutions, but also on the role of the abbess within each house. ²¹⁸ Outside the monastic world, legal-reformist thought could likewise go either way. The elevation of law often served to reinforce the claims of popes and kings as much as limit them. Among the canonists, William Durant the Younger would reverse his conciliar position of the *Tractatus Maior* to a papalist position in the *Tractatus Minor* with relatively little ideological fuss. ²¹⁹ Cardinal Francesco Zabarella's vision of conciliarism suggested a middle way. His image of nested corporate power within the Church was undoubtedly novel in its synthesis: the *congregatio fidelium*, represented most naturally by the general council, held ultimate ecclesiastical authority in final analysis, but conceded it to the pope by way of the college of cardinals, who essentially acted as a balancing oligarchical authority to hierarchy. ²²⁰

It is arguably this vision of oligarchical authority that most closely matches the tenor of the French Celestine legal vision. Like the other outlooks mentioned, its development was, in both contexts, influenced by pragmatic concerns. Zabarella was a cardinal; moreover, his vision had the benefit of finding a diplomatic centre ground between the canonists who insisted on a more or less absolute papal authority, and those who looked towards a more thoroughgoing conciliar primacy. Likewise, Pocquet and his associates were surely concerned for their own positions within the congregation and to put paid to some of the disorders which had affected the Italian regime, while also having to respect their Italian heritage. But the ideological substrate that underlay this ambivalent oligarchical outlook is also clear: an ideal of reform which demanded that legislation be vigorously enforced at all levels.

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²¹⁷ C. Glassner, 'Stift Melk und die Melker Reform im 15. Jahrhundert', in *Die benediktinische Klosterreform im 15. Jahrhundert*, ed. F.X. Bischof and M. Thurner (Berlin, 2013), 75–92; W. Ziegler, *Die Bursfelder Kongregation in der Reformationszeit, dargestellt an Hand der Generalkapitelrezesse der Bursfelder Kongregation* (Münster, 1968); Leccissotti, *Congregationis S. Iustinae de Padua O.S.B. Ordinationes Capitulorum Generalium*, xxvi–xlii.

²¹⁸ Lopez, *Culture et sainteté*, 203–25.

²¹⁹ Fasolt, *Council and Hierarchy*, 315–18.

²²⁰ Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory*, 234–5.

In sum, the constitutional development of the Celestine order was heavily influenced by an underlying ideology in which exacting, scrupulous practice and the veneration of law as a path of reformist perfection were seen as key to the spiritual progress of their communities. Circumstantial pressures have not been ignored: they were of course ever present. But the idea that spiritual inspiration and legal institutionalism were so separate does not appear to fit the evidence. Their constitutions did not simply represent a compromise with the world: they were also the product of a more natural outpouring of ascetic and reformist energy in the face of new challenges, influences and interactions brought about by monks who feared so much within the wider world, but who also held much hope in the ability of legislation both to protect them spiritually and to perfect their communities.

This corrective to the traditional understanding of the place of legislation in monastic life, however, does not mean that their constitutions and the ideology they represented could not produce great tensions in practice. The potential for this has been witnessed throughout these pages. Their ascetic distinctiveness helped build a growing place for them within the world. Legislation helped to mediate the tension between the two, providing a new strategy for spiritual safety, but from another aspect, did it not also have the potential to bring that tension into ever more precise focus? In turn, the rising importance of exacting and minute legislative standards for the purity of the French monks was surely a grave burden on the conscience. They held out the promise of a clean soul and reform sought through practical means, but their detail meant that failures were more inevitable than ever. They raised questions for the community too. The strict standards of Observants elsewhere engendered cultures marked by accusation;²²¹ and in their desire to drive reform, the small group of men who led the French Celestines in this period monopolized power despite the strong expectations of the accountability and humility of superiors still contained within their constitutions and spiritual tradition. There were potential difficulties here: how much they would be realized would ultimately depend on how they were dealt with in practice. These matters form no small part of the subject matter of the next chapter. Here it should suffice to say that any such difficulties derived from their literalism and legalism should not serve to overly denigrate the achievement of these monks. Few ideological expressions come without significant practical tensions. Despite them, the French Celestine constitutions made sense as a fountain of spiritual hope in the context of their times.

221 See especially Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors*.

3. The challenges and adaptation of regular observance

Ascetic standards

The French Celestine constitutions present the image of a congregation concerned with a minute level of ascetic and penitential detail in their pursuit of purity. Nevertheless, the monks were simultaneously being drawn into ever-closer proximity with secular society. If the ascetic standards prescribed by their constitutions were enhanced in the face of this challenge, the inherent tension within this combination deserves to be brought into greater focus on the level of practice. How successful were the French Celestines in upholding their evolving vision of 'purity' in this environment? How did discipline operate within their communities? And what can be seen of the knock-on effects of these factors at an individual and communal level?

Rank-and-file discipline

It is not possible to provide anything approaching a complete study on Celestine discipline. The constitutions themselves provide hints of the challenges faced, but the discussions that produced them have not survived. Beyond this, the evidence is anything but comprehensive. One source, however, does stand out: the Celestine chronicle of Metz. Its initial part was written by Nicole de Luttange (d.1439), a long-time procurator of the house and prior in 1438. His work traces the history of the house up to the late fourteenth century and it is continued in the same style by another writer, most likely writing in the 1470s. Their work combines a simple record of the monastery's development and internal events with descriptions of its interactions with the life of the city and the region: professions and deaths of monks, the elevation of new priors and the elections of new provincials are recorded alongside benefactor burials and their founder's pious wishes.¹ The intended audience would seem to have been internal: the work provides a quite candid reminder to the monks of the deeds of their predecessors, whether good or bad, and their place within Metz society.² As a result, it

¹ See Chapter 4 (169-71) for more on the desires of Bertrand le Hongre, their founder.

² The earliest and best copy is found in Metz, BM, MS 833. For an analysis of the manuscript tradition and how the chronicle was written, see Chazan, 'La Chronique des Célestins de Metz',

provides excellent detail on the challenges of Celestine monastic life within a not untypical urban context.

If the house did not represent a foundation of the very highest elites – its founder was a prominent bourgeois, Bertrand le Hongre –, it was nevertheless founded within the city and its membership had a distinctly bourgeois feel to it, whether drawn from Metz or from elsewhere.³ These characteristics had the potential to blur the ascetic dividing lines between the monastery and its surrounds, as occasional notices in the chronicle make clear. At the milder end of such encroachments, the notice concerning Galtier Vier's profession (1389) stated that he had friends who 'visited him too often.' Being from the city of Metz itself, it was evidently difficult for him to entirely escape his former life. To avoid 'damage to his [spiritual] health', he was subsequently moved on to another house within the order: he never returned to Metz, and died in Paris.⁴ Whether one was from Metz or not, proximity made occasional interactions with the townspeople inevitable. Another profession notice indicates a more alarming result: Olivier Jenereti (professed in 1412, origin unknown) left the religion for '*ung ordre plus large*' (i.e. less strict) after having 'made much trouble for the monastery' by sowing 'dissent between a certain lord and his wife through his words.'⁵

Beyond these individual notices, the chronicle details several curious occurrences that required security around the doors of the church to be enhanced. When Simon Bonhomme arrived as prior in 1392, he decreed that the doors of the church which opened onto the street should be sealed with two locks, to be held by two different monks. This was put in place due to an incident in which a monk, having had access to an external door key, 'went out from there by night and into the town, where he pleased himself.' What exactly this monk may have done in the town is not stated, but upon his actions coming to light, he was removed from the order.⁶ Interestingly, this issue of the security of the church, with its direct entrance/exit onto the

113–49. Some sections are also transcribed in E. de Bouteiller, 'Notice sur le couvent des Celestines de Metz', *Memoires de l'academie imperiale de Metz*, 43 (1861–2), 488–535, at 467–514.

3 Chazan, 'Le couvent des célestins de Metz', 7–8, 17.

4 Metz, BM, MS 833, 52: 'Et fut muf de seans pourtant que ces amis seculiers li faisoient trop d'empechement a son salut si comme il disoit. Car il le venoient trop sovent visiter'; see also Chazan, 'Le couvent des célestins de Metz', 8, 27.

5 Metz, BM, MS 833, 100: 'Et fit dez tribulations biacop a monastere pourtant que il ne fut mie de si bonne conversation comme son estate le requiroit [...] par ses parollez mit dissension en ung signour de Mets et sa feme et fut grant honte a monasteire'; see also Chazan, 'Le couvent des célestins de Metz', 26, 33.

6 Metz, BM, MS 833, 57: 'Et fut ordonnee l'ordonance dez dittes ii clef pour cause rasonnable. Car l'annee devant que ledist frere Simon fut ennoiez pour estre priour de seans avoit alcun qui

street, would make another appearance in 1394. A girl, 'of around 18 years of age' was found asleep in the church one morning: this caused scandal, with some observers harbouring 'bad suspicions' over the cause. The writer does present a plausible story regarding why the girl would have wanted to be there – she was fleeing a cruel mother –, but quite how she got into the church, the writer fails to clarify. Rather he points out that wild dogs had managed the same feat.⁷ In 1430, the security of the doors in the church was again strengthened, although no detail is given as to why. They were always to be locked before dusk, and if they ever had to be opened after this, two monks had to be present at the same time so as to 'avoid any suspicion, as much that of the brothers as seculars'.⁸ Finally, in 1452, when the female Penitents of Saint Mary Magdalene were forced to relocate to land adjacent to the Celestine house, their own house apparently having been damaged by war, the Celestine prior of Metz, Jacques Gurnet d'Amance responded by blocking one of the entrances into the church that led out in that direction, in order to stop 'any occasion [of contact] and wicked suspicions'.⁹

If reinforcing discipline around the doors was obviously a matter of monastic security on one level, there was, in the first example, a clear breach of monastic discipline, and in the final three, a consistent mention of 'suspicions'. There was undoubtedly a measure of reputational concern behind the community's actions: their proximity to the townsfolk meant transgressive interactions might be noticed, and the urban environment meant rumours could spread faster. The Celestines' obvious aspirations towards a pristine asceticism surely heightened the risk of allegations of hypocrisy: from this perspective, one can understand the 'great shame' said to have been brought upon the Metz house by Olivier Jenereti, as well as the need to lock the doors ever more tightly, lest monks cavort in the town at night or a woman breach the enclosure. But the 1430 stipulation on door

gardoit per nuit lez clef de la porte sus le champassalle. Et quant les freres estient couchiez il en alloit per nuit en la ville ou il li plaisoit.'

7 Ibid., 60: 'Assavoir est que en cest ville cest assavoir en la rue de persallis avoit et demouroit une jone fille de l'aige de xviii ans ou environ sans pere la quelle avoit aucune chose fait que desplaisoit a sa mere [...] et d'aventure vint en notre esglise en la quel elle demourait tout nuit jusque a lendemain [...] aucuns gens que la virent en furent scandalasies et mal edifiez car il orent tres mavaise suspicions quel ne fut estey enclose seans de fait avisey [...] Car aussi on y'ait aucuns foix enclos des chiens matin que huellient par nuit et se fasient grant paour az secretam et az aultres frates.'

8 Ibid., 127: 'Memor que yci fuit ordonnez que le secretam n'allait point cloire lez huis de l'esglise devant le duiey ne ouvrir apres le duiet seul mais que aucuns frere allait avec luy que seroit ordonney pour oster toute suspicions tant des freres comme dez seculiers.'

9 Ibid., 177; transcribed in E. de Bouteiller, 'Notice', 532.

security raises a crucial point: the scandal they feared was ‘as much that of the brothers’ as of outsiders. Internal rancour created through the searching scrupulosity of the monks themselves seems to have been no less problematic than external reputation. Indeed, while both writers had no issue admitting to major and obvious breaches of discipline – albeit with a certain coyness over the most lurid, possibly sexual details –, around this last tightening of the rules no incident is even listed, which may be suggestive of the more precautionary tendencies witnessed among the Celestines. The same is also true of the 1452 decision to block an entrance. Here it was not only a matter of avoiding ‘suspicion’, but any ‘occasion’ of contact altogether, a phrasing which again seems indicative of the French Celestines’ own concerns. Such might of course represent the interpretation of the chroniclers. But that in turn would suggest their scruples, and a desire to inculcate a similar caution among their audience: they reminded later readers why these actions had been taken, of the dangers of removing such safeguards and of the rigid example of their forebears in the face of such challenges.

These outlines give colour to the sort of developments seen in the French Celestine constitutions. The well-connected and urban reality in which so many French Celestines found themselves went hand in hand with an increasingly minute and exacting asceticism, both in precept and also, as seen here, in practice. At Metz, the impression is of a monastic community that was determined to maintain its scruples in spite of challenges, rather than to compromise on them. Their discipline may well have made them more confident in accepting foundations in such locations. In turn, the world they found themselves connected with, alongside the occasional transgression, only seems to have pushed them to take further precautions.

A broader sense of this overall ascetic and disciplinary atmosphere can be sensed from the details concerning those monks who came to leave the order. Among the 103 named professions at the house between foundation and 1468, thirteen (ten monks and three oblates) left.¹⁰ At nearly 13 per cent, such a figure is probably not unrelated to the inherent challenges that their urban environment posed for their ascetic separation. But it most likely also speaks to the continued strength of scrupulous discipline within the same community. Nine of them left for other orders, often described as ‘plus large’

10 Metz, BM, MS 833: Jean dit de Baxey (oblate; professed 1377, 16), Nicole de Mohrange (1398, 73), Jean Benoît (oblate; 1401, 80), Dimenche Benoît (1403, 82), Henry de Messerich (1404, 83), Felix de Conday (1405, 85), Jean Blesey dit le Hocquay (1410, 97), Olivier Jenereti (1412, 100) Gerard fis Demangin (1418, 108), Jean de Saint-Pierremont (oblate; 1427, 125), Didier Boncompagnon (1434, 139), Nicole de Maqueris (1435, 140) and Pierre du Chaingier (1437, 144).

(i.e. less strict).¹¹ While that number included the aforesaid Jenereti, can it really be believed that they had all lost their way so gravely? There was a certain recognition in the chronicle that Celestine ascetic demands could be unusually stringent: Pierre du Chaingier (professed in 1437), a former black monk who converted to the Celestines, left because he 'could not carry the austerity of the religion'.¹²

To judge by the many more notices (over twenty) that the Metz chroniclers provide of monks who were 'good religious', the majority did strive to meet the required 'austerity': the list included five Celestine oblates, the same class of men that their constitutions expressed such concern over.¹³ But for those who truly strived, there were risks: there are hints that their ascetic rigours may have pushed some into physical and mental infirmity. Looking further afield from Metz, in c.1408 Jean Gerson evoked precisely this fear over his youngest brother, Jean the Celestine, who had professed at Marcoussis in the previous year.¹⁴ The latter had been 'disturbed by the most dreadful nightmares' in a manner that the elder Jean said was almost akin to 'mania or madness'. In a highly charged letter to Nicolas, his other brother in the congregation, the elder Jean suggested that the Celestine way of life – 'hard fasting, vigils beyond the norm, a momentous program of vocal prayer,

11 Metz, BM, MS 833: Jean dit de Baxey (oblate; professed 1377, 16) became an Augustinian; Jean Benoît (oblate; 1401, 80) and Didier Boncompagnon (1434, 139) went to the Franciscans; and Jean Blesey dit le Hocquay (1410, 97) and Nicole de Maqueris (1435, 140) went to the Benedictines. Henry de Messerich (1404, 83), Felix de Conday (1405, 85), Olivier Jenereti (1412, 100) and Gerard fis Demangin (1418, 108) also all went to less strict congregations ('ung ordre plus large'); see also, Chazan, 'Le couvent des célestins de Metz', 7.

12 Metz, BM, MS 833, 144: 'Maix il ne perseveroit point. Car il ne port pourter l'austeritey de la religion.'

13 Metz, BM, MS 833: Jean Melme (1377, 145: 'ung tres bon et devot religieux'), Jean Hermonelle (oblate; 1385, 38–9: 'de bonne jalousie de religion'), Aburtin de Laiey (oblate; 1388, 51: 'tres hobediant et plain de bonne vertus'), Jean Hennequin (1391, 55: 'bonne vie et sainte conversation'), Nicole de Toul (1396, 64: 'bonne conversation'), Gerard Buxerus (1400, 76: 'bonne conversation'), Nicole de Luttange (1400, 152: 'bonne vie religieuse'), Martin Belfil (1403, 82: 'saincte conversation'), Pierson de Xemme (oblate; 1404, 84: 'bonne conversation'), Jean d'Alain (1406, 86: 'perseverit tousjour'), Jean de Gremay (oblate; 1414, 103: 'saincte conversation'), Jean de Han (1415, 104: 'plain de bonne oeuvre et conversation'), Jean Fauquegnon (1418, 108: 'tousjours de bon zeile et de devotion'), Henry de Sierlz (oblate; 1419, 111: 'homme devot et obedient'), Gerard Ponictet (1424, 116: 'bonne vie et conversation'), Jean Godre (1425, 118: 'plain de obediace tant a ces maiours comme az aultres freres'), Jean Bealrobert (1425, 118: 'doulce personne et de bonne sainte conversation'), Didier Richart (1427, 121: 'bonne discipline'), Pierre Franquelet (1429, 126: 'ung tres bon religieux'), Jean Creusange de Citania (1431, 129: 'ung vallant religieux et de sainte conversation'), Thielemann le Tixeran de Bolay (1432, 133: 'grans zeile et ferveur'), Didier Baraxet (1435, 140: 'ung religieux de bonnes mors et de devotion') and Mathieu Odenat (1437, 147: 'bon clerc').

14 Aurélien, *La vie admirable*, 326.

strict readings, and similar practices' – had simply been too much for his youngest brother.¹⁵ Whatever the exact truth, it is easy to envisage how both the physical grind and, what's more, the rather scrupulous attitude towards purity that underlay it, might have had such an effect.

Nicolas, for his part, had apparently accused the elder Jean of disturbing his youngest sibling by the writings he sent. Such, in this instance, may speak primarily to their sibling relationship. But it does also fit into a broader pattern of rather accusatory Celestines. The Metz chronicle states that the unfortunate Pierre Chaingier, who struggled with Celestine austerity, 'died in the gutter in Rome'.¹⁶ This tone echoes an earlier instance, this time recorded by Nicole de Luttange: Jean de Baxey (professed 1377), who joined the Augustinians, became little more than a beggar and as such stood as an example to any who would not submit to Celestine 'correction'.¹⁷ Elsewhere, the novice whom the mid-fifteenth-century Celestine prelate Jean Bertauld wrote to was as much excoriated for thinking of leaving the order as encouraged to continue in his profession. Bertauld presented the world to his correspondent as 'a filthy sty': that, in Bertauld's eyes, made the novice an 'unclean pig' for wanting to return.¹⁸ The novice's explanations that Bertauld cites in fact appear far from unreasonable: he simply 'could not bear to carry the fasting' that occurred in the order. But for Bertauld that could only be a 'false excuse'.¹⁹ The letter was preserved, thus standing as both an exhortation, but also as a somewhat spiteful warning. Thinking back to young Jean the Celestine, one's sympathy is redoubled: if this manner of living really had proved to be too much, how would he have been treated if he had decided that enough was enough?

The Celestine leadership

As seen, Simon Bonhomme was depicted as forthright in imposing ascetic rigour at the house of Metz; Jean Bertauld, prior of Mantes and future abbot-general of the order, was likewise happy to hector a novice, mixing

15 Jean Gerson, 'Á Nicolas Gerson, Paris, c. 1408', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, ii (1960), no. 23, 86–90, at 88–9.

16 Metz, BM, MS 833, 144: 'Et se alait poc apres a romme, et morut a chemin.'

17 Ibid., 16–17: 'ne perseverat pas en nostre religion pourtant que on le vould corriger d'alcune chose qu'il avoit non bien fait qu'il ne deut [...] Et a la fin il trespessait en tres grande poverté de la richesse de cest monde et en grande maladie du corps'; Chazan, 'La Chronique des Célestins de Metz', 133.

18 Paris, BA, MS 1071, fol. 38; also quoted in Chapter 2.

19 Ibid.: 'ieiunia ferre non sustines ais. Excusatio fallens.'

encouragement with threatening language. If there is little doubt that the rank and file of the congregation were broadly subject to a robust and rigorous monastic life, what about those who, like these men, were charged with its inculcation and enforcement? After all it was priors and other functionaries who, in representing their communities, would naturally have interacted the most with benefactors as well as political and ecclesiastical authorities, and thus had the most opportunity to breach ascetic standards. In Celestine tradition, moreover, significant suspicion was placed on the corrupting effects of office-holding: indeed, their constitutions contained a marked focus on punishing the ascetic lapses of superiors. The balance of following a strict common life alongside the pragmatic decision-making required of all leaders of communities was bound to be challenging.

At Metz, there are several illuminating examples. On the one hand, there is the story of the incorruptible Gerard Poniset, a man of 'bonne vie et conversation'. While not a major Celestine leader – he was prior of Metz once in 1441 –, he resigned the office in 1444 due to being 'too scrupulous and ill' to continue in it.²⁰ Which factor had more effect is not stated. Whatever the case, it is hard not to relate his resignation to the core values of Celestine religion: if one was scrupulous, was it not better, like St Peter Celestine himself, to resign one's office altogether?

If Gerard fled office, other priors seem to have fallen foul of Celestine scrupulosity as they attempted to lead the Metz house. The aforementioned Jacques Gurnet d'Amance (prior from 1451 to 1453) was forced out for being too keen 'to please the lords and seculars' and consequently doing 'things which did not much please the brothers'. It has been suggested that his perceived sin might have been not sufficiently opposing the arrival of the female religious next door to the house: if losing the adjacent entrance was evidently designed to satisfy scruples, others perhaps felt that this was not enough.²¹ Another, Mathieu Odenat de Metz (prior in 1453), was forced out within a year after angering the brothers in his taste for somewhat superfluous constructions: a fine stable, a barn with three doors, and a new study.²² Prior to both of these came an even more interesting case, hinting more directly at the charge of hypocrisy. Marc de Nérac, a former master

20 Metz, BM, MS 833, 163: 'Et en ce chapitre frere gerard poniset se fit deposer de sa propre voluntee pourtant qu'il estoit trop scrupules et aucy malladieux.'

21 Ibid., 139: 'il vouloit trop complaire az seculiers et est une chose que empêche aucune fois que l'amour ne puet point estre si parfaite entre le president et lez freres.' Chazan, 'La Chronique des Célestins de Metz', 137; Chazan, 'Le couvent des célestins de Metz', 24.

22 Metz, BM, MS 833, 183: 'Mais tous ceci ne se faisoit point par le bon grey des freres'; Chazan, 'Le couvent des célestins de Metz', 24.

of arts at Paris made prior in 1439 by Bassand, was forced out of office in 1441 in sympathy with the brothers ('en leur consolation').²³ His offence, to judge by an earlier comment of the chronicle, was twofold. On the one hand, he seemed too secular: while the French Celestines had no problem with intellectuals per se, the issue was that he wished to 'rule as he had at the schools of Paris'. On the other, he himself was 'a bit too malicious'. Here, it would seem was a man happy to enforce discipline on others, but who lacked self-awareness of his own arrogance.²⁴

Nevertheless, none of these figures were members of that small group of men who effectively ran the French Celestine congregation. Who oversaw them, except themselves? For Pocquet and Bassand especially, the two most prominent men in this period, there are signs, on one level, that they did their best to be seen as disciplined and humble. Pocquet, the Metz chronicle tells us, was assiduous in his visitations but always came on foot, with one brother assisting him: he never rode a horse or an ass.²⁵ The rigour that the *Vita* of Jean Bassand celebrated in its subject also found an echo in the Metz account of the same man, despite the distaste for Marc de Nérac, one of his protégés: Jean himself was 'a very holy man of great austerity'.²⁶ Simon Bonhomme, meanwhile, was of such 'fervour' that 'everyone came to love God if they held him in love and reverence'.²⁷

These descriptions of men who went above and beyond the call of duty in their rigours nevertheless found a counterpoint in their intimate bonds with aristocratic society. Pierre Pocquet, for instance, probably acted as a confessor for Louis, duke of Orléans. In one of the keynote sermons of Jean Gerson's career, *Veniat Pax* (1408), which appealed for reconciliation between the Burgundian and Orléanist-Armagnac factions, he would speak of Pocquet (whom he called 'Pierre Bourguignon') providing counsel to Louis shortly before his murder; the monk had apparently told the duke that his troubles were 'money, with which you must pay your debts to God'.²⁸ It is also known that Pocquet acted as an testamentary executor for Louis.²⁹ Moreover, it

23 Metz, BM, MS 833, 159.

24 Ibid., 154: 'cuidoit faire comme il faisoit quant il regentoit ez escolles de Paris portant fuit il ung poc malixiez a porter.' Chazan, 'La Chronique des Célestins de Metz', 137.

25 Metz, BM, MS 833, 64: 'Car jamais n'aloit en visitation sus chevaz ne sus asues'.

26 Ibid., 98, 166: 'ung tres sancte homme de grant austeritey', 'ung homme de tres sancte vie et conversation'.

27 Ibid., 123: 'Et ait estey de telle vie et ferveur a sa religion que tout gens amant dieu sy l'avient en amour et reverence.'

28 Jean Gerson, 'Veniat Pax', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, vii.2 (1968), no. 396, 1100–23, at 1113.

29 'Testament de Louis d'Orléans': Beurrier, *Histoire*, 292–335, especially 332 for Pocquet.

could only have been Pocquet who allowed Philippe de Mézières, the former counsellor to Charles V, to live unprofessed in the Paris house from 1380 until his death in 1405, since he was provincial prior at the time.³⁰

Pocquet's connections were clearly materially beneficial to the monks: both Louis and Philippe became major benefactors of the congregation. Moreover, no constitutions had been broken by his actions. That said, there is no clear suggestion that the deposed priors of Metz had gone beyond the letter of the law: the fact that leaders were held to higher standards left them vulnerable to accusations in the name of scrupulosity. In spirit, the constitutions betray a clear suspicion of such interactions, and Pocquet himself had arguably enhanced expectations: he probably had a hand in the 1399 constitution that banned tenured service to secular and lay lords. The evidence concerning the most powerful Celestines of the mid-fifteenth century is more emphatic. The portraits provided by later biographical/hagiographical compilations, Claude Firmin's sixteenth-century *Vitae Patrum ordinis Celestinorum* (c.1550)³¹ and Nicolas de la Ville's *Vitae Provincialium et priorum Congregationis Celestinorum Provincie Gallice* (1653),³² suggest that these men pushed more boundaries than their predecessors in currying external favour. In both compilations (De la Ville essentially repeats Firmin in this case), one finds record of arguably the most dominant French Celestine of the mid-fifteenth century, Guillaume Romain (made provincial in 1456, 1465 and 1471),³³ providing frequent service to Louis XI outside of the monastery. It is said that the king often desired to hear him preach: both accounts take care to note that his absence from the monastery on most of these occasions was not due to the king's order, but rather coincidence.³⁴

30 N. Jorga, *Philippe de Mézières* (London, 1973), 4; see also Chapter 5, 242–3.

31 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18330.

32 Avignon, BM, MS 1439.

33 Guillaume had also been prior of Villeneuve-lez-Soissons (1444–50) and of Paris (1459–62, 1468–71); see Avignon, BM, MS 1439, 128. He showed particular interest in copying/procuring books for the monks, often in the French vernacular. For instance, Paris, BA, MSS 3513 (*Compendium historial*, a French work by his brother, Henri Romain), 3695 (a French translation of Livy completed by Guillaume's brother, Henri); Paris, BnF, MS fr. 9611 (a theological compilation in French); Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MSS 519 (Pocquet's *Orationarium*), 1048 (a compilation of French sermons); and Cleveland, Public Library, John G. White Collection, F. 4091.94.M579s (a copy of Philippe de Mézières's *Songe du Vieil Pèlerin*). For the latter, I am indebted to Kristin Bourassa, who discovered an original biography of Philippe appended to the MS that accredits the copying of the text to Guillaume's orders. See K. Bourassa, 'Counselling Charles VI of France: Christine de Pizan, Honorat Bovet, Philippe de Mézières, and Pierre Salmon', University of York, PhD thesis (2014), 244–50.

34 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18330, fol. 43r–v: 'Sed et francorum Rex christianissimus Ludovicus undecimus verbum dei, ex eius ore, frequentius audivit. Ita ut reverendum patet foras proficiscentem

But the story of his death, reported by both Firman and De la Ville, suggests that he also provided political service to the king. When Guillaume went on an embassy to Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy, in 1475, he was apparently falsely accused by ‘other resentful legates of the king’ of ‘having had familiarity and words in private with Burgundy’. ‘The king at once judged this innocent man to be a traitor’, and ordered his execution, wanting him to be thrown into the Seine. The sentence was commuted ‘to conserve the honour of the religion’, but he was nevertheless quietly killed by being made to eat a poisoned egg.³⁵

Here then, one finds a monk whose worldly entanglements (uncriticized by these later sources) appear to have cost him his life. Elsewhere, Nicolas de la Ville records a longer-term engagement involving Simon Trouvé, Romain’s contemporary and himself twice provincial. It is alleged that he served as the future Louis XI’s orator when, with Charles VII still on the throne, Louis fled to his uncle, the duke of Burgundy. This was unquestionably against the 1399 constitution forbidding service to external lords, although the writer does note that Trouvé was apparently sent with the permission of the pope, who could have provided dispensation.³⁶

It should be emphasized here that no external corroboration for these deeds of Guillaume Romain or Simon Trouvé is available, and it is not known from what sources Claude Firmin and Nicolas de la Ville received their information. Those later authors, writing at a time when the congregation’s glory had somewhat faded, saw mostly positive memories of social prominence in these tales, and there may of course be some hint of exaggeration therein. But nevertheless, comparing these accounts with those that the same authors provide of Pocquet and Bassand – which essentially repeat the same details of external interactions present in earlier accounts – would

vel ad cenobium parisiense redeuntem de equo descendere et verbum dei sine mora sibi annuciare et predicare iusserit; Avignon, BM, MS 1439, 128: ‘quandoque pro officii sui munere foras proficisceretur aut in coenobium rediret’.

35 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18330, fol. 43v: ‘Unde indignati alii regis legati quod cum burgundo familiaritatem ac secreto verba habuisset denunciarunt. Ac proditorem continuo rex arbitratus virum innocentem nullo iuris ordine servato, [...] in sequendam proiici furibundus iussit. Verum propter religionis conservandum honorem, commutata quidem est pena, sed non ablata aut revocata mortis sententia. Nam ovum intoxicatum absorbere coactus nocte proxima innocentem reddidit creatori’; see also Avignon, BM, MS 1439, 128–9.

36 Avignon, BM, MS 1439, 212: ‘Unde Avenionem missus priorem ibi agit usque ad 1450, quo tertio provincialis creatur. Per id tempus a nicolao pontifice allegatus est orator ad Ludovicum delpinum, caroli 7 galliae regis filium, et postea Galliae regem, qui invito patre ad Philippum burgundie ducem se contulerat.’ A marginal note states: ‘Nicolaus qui obiit anno 1455, Delphinus fugit in Burgundiam anno 1456.’ See Chapter 2, 93, on the 1399 constitution.

seem to suggest a certain increase in the depths of worldly entanglements for the leadership of the congregation. And if Pocquet and Bassand appear tougher on themselves and somewhat less adventurous, the seeds of their successors' actions can be seen in what is remembered of their own.

The accounts bear testament to what was not only a perennial tension within monastic life – between the desire for ascetic separation and the practical need to secure the victuals and security of monasteries within society – but also one that had arguably never been tauter than in an Observant context. The exacting desire for purity suggested by the French Celestine constitutions and the Metz chronicle was married with a growing interest from elite benefactors who wanted these pure religious within their world and, moreover, a desire among the monks themselves, as witnessed in the *Vita* of Bassand, to take part in reform beyond their walls. The latter two facets are fully discussed in the final chapter, and it will be seen there that their overall ascetic reputation remained very high throughout the period. The concern of Gerson, evidently a close observer of both head and members among the monks, for his brother's health amid Celestine fervour perhaps brings us closer to the broad character of French Celestine observance at this time. But if their earnest asceticism remained palpable, internally, one can envisage significant tensions. A potentially hammering ascetic weight was imposed on junior and rank-and-file monks, the former barely removed from the world, the latter often still at little physical distance from it. But this discipline was also somewhat contradicted by the seniors who imposed it, and perhaps increasingly so. Some may have strived to heighten their asceticism in other ways, but might they not still have been seen as arrogant, like Marc de Nérac, given these tensions? Both these issues had their roots in their scrupulous, legalistic outlook on monastic life, both were enhanced by the realities of its implantation in the world, and both had the potential to disturb the smooth personal and communal humility and harmony that Benedictine life ultimately envisioned. And yet, for all this, the congregation held together. How were they able to manage the tensions inherent in their way of life?

The Celestine *Quodlibeta*: the moderation of 'regular observance'

A fruitful place to begin the search for an answer is found in an unusual series of questions on moral quandaries, asked by the Celestine monks of Paris, and the responses to them, provided in part by Pierre Pocquet, but primarily – and more intriguingly – by the most influential theologian of

their age, Jean Gerson (d.1429).³⁷ It almost certainly dates from some time after his promotion to the chancellorship of the University of Paris (1395), since Gerson is consistently called *cancellarius*, and before 1408, when Pocquet died; Pocquet's final provincial reign in 1396–9 represents perhaps the most plausible timing. The questions are labelled as *quodlibeta*, suggesting that they drew inspiration from a venerable format of oral discussion still in use in universities, where an audience asked whatever questions they pleased (hence *quodlibeta*, 'whatever') of a master or advanced bachelor in a particular discipline. The Celestine *Quodlibeta* certainly seem to record oral proceedings, and in fact present a less-edited record of them than was usually the case in those written records derived from the schools. Rather than a *determinatio*, or an *ordinatio*, in which the answers derived from the questions were reduced to a more coherent, argumentative form, the text seems closer to a *reportatio*, the relatively unedited minutes of the proceedings.³⁸ If the questions have been somewhat ordered by topic, some answers remain relatively undeveloped and off the cuff: some were even as simple as *puto* or *puto sic* (I believe so). Albeit only capturing a moment in their monastic experience, and something of a special occasion at that, the glimpse it offers of the monks is unusually multidimensional. On the one hand, it offers a window into their concerns, and how they interacted with their superiors. On the other, it offers at least partial insight into the wider framework of influences from which they could draw, in this case not only the methods of the schools but the moral theology of Gerson.

For the Celestines of Paris, to ask 'whatever' they wished meant to discuss both the day-to-day and more exceptional moral challenges and quandaries of their observance. There is much in these questions that feels very familiar from what has already been seen, both in terms of underlying scrupulosity and the tensions predicted. It is little surprise to find that one of the longest questions dealt with the line between communal and personal property. While a classical Benedictine concern, it was one that late medieval Observant reform demanded particular precision over:

37 An edition of the Celestine *Quodlibeta* is found in G. Ouy, 'Gerson and the Celestines: how Jean Gerson and his friend Pierre Poquet replied to various questions of discipline and points of conscience', in *Reform and Renewal in the Middle Ages*, ed. T.M. Izbicki and C.M. Bellitto (Leiden, 2000), 113–40, at 118–40. From now on this edition is cited simply as 'Quodlibeta'.

38 J. Hamesse, 'Theological Quaestiones Quodlibetales', in *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages: the thirteenth century*, ed. C. Schabel (Leiden, 2007), 17–48, at 30–8. See more broadly, P. Glorieux, *La littérature quodlibétique* (Paris, 1925).

If the dispenser or procurator of a monastery, or another to whom money has been given for buying anything for the community or for any cause of the community, should buy for himself or for another a small knife, a writing book, some thread or a needle without the general or special licence and permission of the presiding superior, does this go against the vow of poverty and should it be deemed as ownership? Has he sinned mortally as a transgressor of his vow? And similarly, what if he should give such things to or accept them from outsiders? (question 94)³⁹

As to whether the behaviour described here was a breach of poverty, the answer is, in one respect, clear enough. The items described are in fact remarkably close to those which Benedict cited in chapter 33 of the Rule: having even 'a book, a writing tablet, or stylus' as one's own was an evil practice.⁴⁰ More than that, in the case of a procurator or dispenser misusing common funds in this matter, it could be seen as theft. As such it might seem an odd question to ask, especially since the Celestine constitutions clearly allowed for no relaxation on these matters. The origin of their questioner's concern may well lie in how harshly such matters were treated in the congregation. Benedict had asked that those who indulged in such practices should be warned twice before being punished; the French Celestines, however, inflicted immediate *gravior culpa* punishments for most cases. The question suggests that behind this, a different attitude towards the sin incurred was also present: 'Has he sinned mortally as a transgressor of the vow?' Given this concern, exactly what constituted the 'evil' of property surely mattered that far more. One might even, as a procurator or dispenser, incur such sin relatively thoughtlessly, given that, according to their constitutions, the simple failure to account for such objects might render one liable.

While this lies at the end of the first series – those answered by Gerson alone –, it crowns a host of earlier questions that betray a similar attitude towards sin and salvation, but on an even more minute level than matters that gain mention in the constitutions. On the sacraments, there are questions which suggest an extremely formalist and scrupulous attitude towards the Eucharist: 'Should it be permitted to remove a fly or a spider from the blood [of Christ] with a small spoon or any other unconsecrated implement?' (question 8); 'If a priest omits or believes himself to have omitted something during consecration, should he repeat only that thing which he omitted or

39 'Quodlibeta', 134.

40 Benedict, *Regula*, 38 (c.33).

should he start again from the very beginning?’ (question 14).⁴¹ There are also further inquiries over what actions constituted mortal sin, suggesting a very physical, black-and-white perspective on this issue. For instance, it was asked whether mortal sin was incurred in drunkenness; and likewise, in receiving communion when one had been excommunicated but remained unaware of it or had forgotten about a previous mortal sin (questions 43, 71).⁴² The possibility of mutual recrimination within a monastic environment where minute details of action mattered is particularly palpable: ‘Where only a superior or one or two others know the sin of another, can these men bring this sin to public judgment, and should they do so?’ (question 54); ‘if a number of people should see someone sin, albeit not together (one after another, or at most two at the same time), can they bring him to public judgment?’ (question 67); ‘Should I always provide fraternal correction, as per the verse (Matt. 18: 15), “if thy brother shall offend against thee, go, and rebuke him”?’ (question 69)⁴³

While these questions also reflect a long tradition of penitential literature that focused on details, the influence of a particularly scrupulous ideology seems powerful within them, as their modern editor, Gilbert Ouy, has also commented.⁴⁴ The decision to invite Gerson suggests that Pocquet and possibly others in the community were looking for answers that literalism could not provide. The former became well known for moral teachings that related to the treatment of precept in practice: he drew precise divisions between divine law – framed in more abstract scriptural virtues, particularly those of humility and charity – and all human codes, and employed a certain degree of moral casuistry in defining matters for others.⁴⁵ His answers tally well with what one would expect from him. To the monk who was concerned as to what constituted mortal sin in a vow of poverty (question 94), Gerson provided an answer that was strikingly flexible. The sin of property had not been committed, if in procuring the items previously described, ‘such a procurator should estimate reasonably and credibly that his superior would have happily wanted them, if he knew that these things were done on account of what he [the procurator] was asked to do.’ Conversely, he was only a ‘transgressor of his vow’ if his estimation was that his superior

41 ‘Quodlibeta’, 119–20.

42 Ibid., 124, 129.

43 Ibid., 126, 128.

44 Ouy, ‘Gerson and the Celestines’, 117–18.

45 G.H.M. Posthumus-Meyjes, *Jean Gerson: apostle of unity* (Leiden, 1999), 207–46; Pascoe, *Jean Gerson*, 58–63; D. Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity before Print* (University Park, 2009), 65–71.

would disapprove and punish him.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, the chancellor's answers were less controversial (his response to the question on property also flew in the face of much traditional Benedictine thought), but he continued to challenge the monks to look beyond defining sin by exact standards of action. He argued that 'consent and deliberation' in sin (question 43) and 'diligence' in avoiding it (question 71), i.e. one's intentions, were the defining factors in determining its weight in such instances: did those in question show 'delight' (question 43) or 'contempt' (question 71) in their deeds?⁴⁷ Here he followed Augustine and a great deal of penitential literature, but it is noteworthy that this fundamentally orthodox point needed to be re-emphasized repeatedly before his French Celestine audience. This considered outlook also extended to how they should treat their brothers. Avoiding scandal (*evitanda scandala*), mentioned no less than fourteen times in the course of Gerson's answers, seems closely linked to his understanding of the right path, and a criterion of great importance in interpreting the applicability of precepts: maintaining communal peace and presenting a good example to others mattered. Gerson was careful to remind the monks of the scriptural and canonical injunction that for public judgment, there had to be two witnesses acting on more than just hearsay (question 54).⁴⁸ Meanwhile, for fraternal correction (question 69), he advised that they should carefully consider the likely consequences: might an accusation lead to the sinner becoming worse; might there be a more fruitful time to raise the matter; might the sinner be more receptive to the counsel of another; might it draw oneself away from better things? 'Telling it to the Church' (Matt. 18: 17) could be necessary, but was a last resort where the sinner would not correct himself and his sin should be obvious.⁴⁹ Gerson's doctrine of fraternal correction here, with peace at its core, is similar to that which he would espouse in his later conciliar thought, and his answer perhaps helps to clarify its limits: not all fraternal correction was worthy, since it too had overzealous and prideful applications.

In another response, when asked whether an 'irregular' man should attempt to minister at the altar or take his place in the choir (question 79), Gerson turned on those who, to his mind, had promoted exacting and unforgiving attitudes towards sin. The 'jurists', he states, had mistaken their own rules as entirely divine, even though they could not often agree among

46 'Quodlibeta', 134.

47 Ibid., 124, 129–30.

48 Ibid., 126.

49 Ibid., 129.

themselves as to what these rules were: 'See this, hold it certain; throw away the uncertain' he imagines them as saying.⁵⁰ Gerson thus advised circumspection on legislative commands and prohibitions, telling the monks to judge their applicability by the divine, charitable purpose at which they were aimed. For instance, if someone was found to have lied about an impediment defined by the constitutions of the congregation in making profession, but only after some years (question 91), he advised that a man tolerated for so long should not be expelled unless necessity urged: this course 'avoided scandal and nurtured charity'.⁵¹

What might Pocquet have thought of Gerson's attack on legal practitioners? He was a former jurist himself. Moreover, the attitudes evinced from the Celestines that prompted this answer surely owed much to the influence of the French Celestine stress on strict 'regular observance' that he himself had pushed. Pocquet, however, does not appear mono-directional. His responses in the second series seem to share in some of Gerson's attitude over the dangers of an overzealous scrupulosity. When asked what one should do if 'vain or poisonous thoughts' should arise during worship (question 101), Pocquet responded that 'he should not then occupy himself with those things, but rather proceed beyond them', a response that Gerson said he heartily approved of, further citing the example of a man who 'smiled in his soul' at such thoughts, as if deriding them.⁵² As with Gerson, he appears here to see the weight of sin incurred as circumstantial in part, defined more by intention than by action: thus a man who had dark thoughts of mortal sin only sinned if he did so in a deliberate or knowingly negligent manner (question 96).⁵³ Elsewhere, when asked 'at what point mortal sin is committed in a vow of obedience' (question 105), Pocquet was again careful to ease the consciences of his monks regarding the consequences of not following through on commands, even his own. He responded 'that superiors teaching anything to their subordinates should not intend and ought not to bind their souls; and thus, if anyone should fail to fulfil anything asked of him by a superior from forgetfulness or carelessness, or defer it, he would not on this account sin mortally'. Gerson added to this the key distinction that mortal sin was only incurred when a breach of any statute or command of the superior occurred 'with contempt'.⁵⁴ Here, at least, Pocquet does not feel

⁵⁰ Ibid., 131.

⁵¹ Ibid., 134.

⁵² Ibid., 137.

⁵³ Ibid., 135.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 138.

like one of the superiors that Gerson criticized in *De vita spirituali animae*, who ruled their subordinates solely through fear of sin.

But what of more outright disobedience to superiors? Was it ever justified? Perhaps inevitably within a French Celestine context, which had inherited so much concern over the corrupting effects of office-holding despite the re-emergence of an enforcing oligarchy, the question was raised (question 103): 'Should the junior walking in the street or riding with a senior obey him in all things?' Pocquet responded: 'simply and without any interrogation, the junior ought to obey his senior in all things, unless he should manifestly command something against divine precept.' If the rising authority of men like Pocquet coincided with their drive for 'regular observance', he gave a very traditional answer here, one that the likes of St Bernard would have supported. Gerson's *addendum* was perhaps little more remarkable, if adding perhaps a little more flexibility for individual judgment. He took the monks through the signs of a breach of 'divine precept', placing more general criteria alongside the superior's apparent 'recollection of those things which are held firm within the Order': whether the superior was 'mindful of his health' and 'attentive in action'.⁵⁵ But despite this apparent traditionalism, the context of the disputation appears to reflect more contemporary, Celestine dynamics. On the one hand, Pocquet, a man who had earlier enhanced the ability of himself and his allies to enforce the constitutions, could be seen as increasing his prestige by providing magisterial answers and overseeing the event.⁵⁶ On the other, he also desired – or perhaps even felt the need – to open himself up to questioning by his community and moderation by someone who stood outside their hierarchy.

In sum, the *Quodlibeta* provides a glimpse into some of the tensions that ran through Celestine life. Their rigorous asceticism, their punctilious literalism and the voice of their esteemed leader and architect of 'regular observance', Pierre Pocquet, all hung heavy in the air. But equally, there were ideas and ideals drawn from an outsider, casuist moderation, and a more fluid attitude towards submission: all these seem directed towards inculcating moderation, calm and peace. And if the latter aspects were provided primarily by Gerson himself, he was presumably there at the invitation of Pocquet. The latter could hardly have been unaware of Gerson's attitudes to many of these questions: despite everything else known of Pocquet, he often appears to support the Chancellor's responses. Indeed,

⁵⁵ Ibid., 137–8.

⁵⁶ E. Marmursztejn, 'A Normative Power in the Making', in *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages: the thirteenth century*, ed. C. Schabel (Leiden, 2007), 401–2.

the two men seem to have been friends, to judge both by the *Quodlibeta* and Gerson's aforementioned sermon, *Veniat Pax*.

Multiple paths: the literary culture of the French Celestines

Beneath the tension between the questions and answers of the *Quodlibeta* lay a well-developed and multifaceted intellectual culture. The only surviving contemporary library catalogue of the French Celestines – a partial copy of the holdings of the Paris house dating from the early fifteenth century – suggests that the house had already accumulated over 250 volumes, many containing multiple works bound together.⁵⁷ If legislation was always front and centre within Celestine religion due to the centrality of their constitutions, the vast majority of the reading that the catalogue attests to went far beyond the world of law. Surviving contemporary manuscripts from both Paris and other houses also support this impression. They were oblivious to neither classical philosophy – for instance, both the *Politics* and *Metaphysics* of Aristotle were already in place at Paris in the early fifteenth century – nor to the classics of both scholastic and monastic theology and instruction. Works of the latter category, from Augustine through to the fruits of twelfth- and thirteenth-century spirituality (i.e. the thought of Bernard, Bonaventure and both Hugh and Richard of Saint-Victor), had an important place in their collections.⁵⁸ They also had access to the works of some Eastern ascetic writers, for instance those of John Climacus and Isaac of Nineveh, which were rather rare in the Latin West. Their uncompromising, if not unpromising, physical and practical ascetic tones had found currency among the Spiritual Franciscans – certainly the former and probably the latter were translated into Latin by Angelo Clareno – and their presence among the French Celestines may well tie back to the early proximity of the Italian order to those circles.⁵⁹ Newer material was also present in their

57 Derolez, 'Fragment d'un catalogue'. See also Paris, BnF, MS fr. 15290, an 18th-century catalogue of the holdings of Celestine libraries.

58 Derolez, 'Fragment d'un catalogue', 190–200.

59 Ibid., 191, 196. On Clareno's translations see, J. Gribomont, 'La *Scala Paradisi*, Jean de Raithou et Ange Clareno', *Studia Monastica*, 2 (1960), 345–58; R. Musto, 'Angelo Clareno, O.F.M., Fourteenth-century Translator of the Greek Fathers: an introduction and a checklist of manuscripts and printings of his "Scala Paradisi"', *Archivum fransiscanum historicum*, 76 (1983), 215–38, at 230–1. The Paris Celestine Climacus compilation (vol. cxlv) no longer survives, but its description conforms closely to the Latin edition of his *Ladder of Divine Ascent* (*Scala paradisi*) created and distributed by Clareno: it contained a letter of John of Raithou prior to the main text, and a subsequent gloss. Pierre Pocquet did create a compilation of extracts from the

libraries, such as Thomas a Kempis's *Imitatio Christi*, the fourth book of which is found in an early, if incomplete copy at Avignon.⁶⁰ Henry Suso's mystical treatise *Horologium sapientiae*, which became enormously popular in the fourteenth century, likewise found a receptive audience among the monks.⁶¹ Among the most popular of all, as will be seen, were the works of their interlocutor at the *quodlibeta*: Jean Gerson.

How should one make sense of this schema? In their style of copying, editing and extracting, there is much that resembles the work of the Modern Devout. Monks built out volumes by compiling earlier texts and extracts (*rapiaria*, 'grab-bags', as James Mixson describes them in the context of other Observant groups) dedicated to specific topics.⁶² In the French Celestine environment, the way that these were created might, on the one hand, seem to interact with the more unforgiving aspects of their observance – their asceticism, and even their legalism – in a supportive manner. In the Paris catalogue, one finds an unidentified florilegium, described as a *Liber de abstinencia*.⁶³ Another still extant compilation contained the aforementioned Isaac of Nineveh's *De contemptu mundi* alongside two pseudo-Bernard texts that were popular in Observant circles, the *Speculum monachorum* and the *Formula honestae vitae*, as well as verses concerning the worth of life enclosed in cells. The content, all told, would appear to stress the basic necessity of physical asceticism as a precursor to purity and spiritual growth.⁶⁴ Elsewhere, Avignon, BM, MS 331, compiled by the monk Gautier le Blond in Rouen, contains a variety of small extracts, with

work, however, which does survive, as will be discussed. The compilation of Isaac of Nineveh's homilies – *De contemptu mundi* – also survives: Paris, BA, MS 499, fols 167r–190r. On the ascetic teachings of these writers, see also J. Chrysavgis, *John Climacus: from the Egyptian desert to the Sinaite mountain* (Aldershot, 2004); and P. Hagman, *The Asceticism of Isaac of Nineveh* (Oxford, 2010).

60 Avignon, BM, MS 329, fols 34r–47r; this volume, originally possessed by the Celestines of Gentilly and then Avignon also contains works and extracts from Hugh of St Victor (*De modo orandi*; *De anima* – also attributed to Augustine), pseudo-Bernard (*Scala paradisi*); Gerson (*Regulae morales* – discussed below) and a compilation of quotations attributed to Jerome, Gregory, Augustine, Isidore, Bernard, Hugh of St Victor and others.

61 At least three 15th-century copies of this work survive in Celestine collections: Paris, BA, MS 686, fols 44r–138v (Celestines of Paris); Paris, BA, MS 2672, fols 1r–155r (Celestines of Paris: a French translation apparently produced on the orders of Louis II, duke of Bourbon, by Laurent Premierfait in 1405); and Avignon, BM, MS 325 (Celestines of Avignon, although originally belonging to Nicolas Philippe, a canon of St Desiderius in Avignon: another French translation accredited to the work of the Dominican Jean de Souhaube in 1302).

62 Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors*, 178–9.

63 Derolez, 'Fragment d'un catalogue', 195.

64 Now compiled in Paris, BA, MS 499, fols 167r–190r; see also Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors*, 177.

sections drawn from Venturin of Bergamo (*De altitudine humilitatis*), Seneca (*De quator virtutibus*), John of Wales (*Breviloquium de virtutibus* and *Communiloquium*), Scotus (extracts from his commentary on the *Sentences* regarding sin, confession and absolution) and Augustine (*De mendatio*). Overall, one might note a certain thematic, building on the Celestines' scrupulous approach to purity and penance. Legal thought was also in the mix: in the opening section of Avignon, BM, MS 331, which contains texts focused on the efficacy of the sacraments and liturgy, one finds a canon legal commentary on the decretal *Cum Marthae*, a letter of Innocent III that affirmed the doctrine of real presence, paralleling the obsession with the physical reality of transubstantiation seen in the *Quodlibeta*.⁶⁵ But if much seems to reinforce their concern for ascetic and liturgical precision, drawing from such a range of approaches would surely have encouraged reflection beyond the mathematics of salvation and perfection that their constitutions outlined. In particular, the affective aspect of the monastic tradition, so pronounced from the twelfth century onwards, and the mysticism that was so often related to it was not lost, but revelled in. A number of collections placed more practical guidance (e.g. the aforementioned *Formula honestae vitae*, the Franciscan David of Augsburg's *De institutione novitiorum*, also popular in wider Observant circles), alongside texts that suggested the affective mystical ascent (the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Stimulus amoris*, Bonaventure's *De triplica via*) that could follow renunciation.⁶⁶ The promise that the blow of their strict lives would be softened and rewarded by the infusion of divine love appears to have attracted the interest of the French Celestines at this time.

65 Avignon, BM, MS 331, fols 27–83; Bernard Olivieri, a Catalan Augustinian, is the stated author.

66 Avignon, BM, MS 235, written by a Celestine of Gentilly, contains works or portions of works by David of Augsburg (*De institutione novitiorum* – attributed here to Bernard), James of Milan (*Stimulus amoris* – attributed to Bonaventure), pseudo-Bernard (*Contra prosperitatem temporalem*; *Formula honestae vitae*; also a compilation of quotations attributed to Bernard), as well as a series of alleged extracts from Augustine, Jerome, Gregory, Hugh of St Victor and Bede, and a large collection of anonymous prayers. Avignon, BM, MS 237, written by a Celestine monk of Ambert, contains works by Bonaventure (*Incendium amoris*), David of Augsburg (*De institutione novitiorum* – attributed to Bernard), pseudo-Bernard (*Formula honestae vitae*; *Scala claustralis*), as well as extracts from Peter the Venerable and Augustine. Avignon, BM, MS 238, written by a Celestine of Ternes, contains Bonaventure (*Soliloquium*; *Lignum vitae*) and works by Richard of St Victor (*De preparatione anime ad contemplatione*) and Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen, a member of the Brethren of the Common Life (*De reformatione virium anime*). See also Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors*, 184–5, for a discussion of similar dynamics among other Observants.

If any moderating line of thought seems to have won special favour among the French Celestines, it was that of the same man they turned to for advice in the *Quodlibeta*: Jean Gerson. If Pocquet had already begun to turn to his advice, his influence among the Celestines was doubtless re-enforced by the presence of his two younger brothers in the congregation, from 1401 (Nicolas) and 1407 (Jean the Celestine) respectively. He sent Nicolas, the elder of the two, his treatise *De distinctione verarum revelationum a falsis* (1402) and asked that it be shown to the other monks. Here Gerson warned against the moral and mental dangers of overwrought asceticism: 'excessive abstinence' was no different from 'drunken overeating' in its ignorance of moral discretion and could bring 'mental injury' and the 'disturbance of reason'.⁶⁷ In part, his purpose may well have been to assist them with the counsel of devout lay people, since the visions of the laity are a major focus of the text, but the words foreshadow the concerns he would later voice about Celestine practices in 1408 in his letter to the same man. His youngest brother, Jean the Celestine, would prove even more of a conduit. This brother seems to have acted as an editor and distributor for his works, which doubtless improved the Celestine monks' access to them.⁶⁸

Through these paths, the writings of Gerson came to occupy a place of prominence in surviving French Celestine *raparia*.⁶⁹ His works on contemplative methodology proved of interest, as one might expect,⁷⁰ but surviving manuscripts suggest that his thought on moral discernment might have been even more important. The reassurance he provided over the wages of sin was also deemed useful by at least one Celestine compiler: Gerson's short tract *Circa materiam excommunicationum* (1418), which argues for the use of this punishment only when someone was unwilling to listen to others regarding their wrongs, appears in the aforementioned compilation of Gautier Le Blond (Avignon, BM, MS 331).⁷¹ Gerson's short treatise, *De potestate absolvendi*,

67 Jean Gerson, 'À Nicolas Gerson, 1402', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, ii (1960), 49; Jean Gerson, 'De distinctione verarum revelationum a falsis', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, iii (1962), no. 90, 36–56, at 44.

68 G. Ouy, 'Le Célestin Jean Gerson, copiste et éditeur de son frère', in *La collaboration dans la production de l'écrit médiéval*, ed. H. Spilling (Paris, 2003), 281–313; Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity*, 197–8.

69 Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity*, 224–5, provides a list of surviving Celestine manuscripts containing Gerson's works.

70 For instance, Paris, BA, MS 2121; this 15th-century manuscript belonging to the Celestines of Offémont contains two French devotional tracts of Jean Gerson: *La mendicité spirituelle*, fols 1r–59v, and *La montagne de contemplation*, fols 60–93.

71 Avignon, BM, MS 331, fols 151v–154r. Jean Gerson, 'Circa materiam excommunicationum', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, vi (1965), no. 290, 294–6.

is found in the same collection.⁷² This text likewise takes up the theme of reassuring souls concerned over the weight of sin, arguing against reserving absolution for certain serious sins (particularly those of a sexual nature) to bishops: in his view, the power of absolving was a general characteristic of the priesthood, and one's appointed confessor could provide satisfaction in almost all cases, without any further need for self-recrimination. In two other surviving fifteenth-century *rapiaria* originally belonging to the Celestines of Gentilly, Gerson's *Regulae morales* is found.⁷³ This work strongly resembles traditional monastic florilegia, and might at first sight appear to present a series of essentially orthodox conclusions on sacraments and capital sins. But it also contains the subtlety that is typical of Gerson's moral theology.⁷⁴ Throughout, the ends and circumstances of actions are stressed more than their practical characteristics, again seemingly in order to reassure the consciences of the scrupulous: echoing the *Quodlibeta*, Gerson stated that '[n]o desire for something forbidden [...] is in and of itself mortal sin'.⁷⁵

When placed alongside the evidence of the *Quodlibeta*, the popularity of the works of Jean Gerson suggests a level of institutional openness to this kind of calming moderation. On the one hand, this seems somewhat odd given what has been seen of the French Celestine constitutions. The same leadership who, on the one hand, promoted a 'regular observance' defined by rigour and precision were happy to have Gerson moderate their monks both in person and through the copying of texts. But taking into account the kind of quandaries that their strict observance provoked – for instance, over the weight of sin incurred in lapses, over when to accuse one's brother, and over the accountability of superiors –, it was perhaps a matter of some necessity. Turning to the works of Gerson's fellow respondent at the *quodlibeta*, Pierre Pocquet, it is clear that the same man who promoted a more rigorous observance and strengthened the power of the office of provincial prior also had the intellectual depth to respond to the challenges created by these features. Prior to the *Quodlibeta* even, he refined their spiritual path through the deployment of both older writers and his own compositions. Parts of his *Orationarium* (written c.1378–91) have already

72 Avignon, BM, MS 331, fols 149v–151r; Jean Gerson, 'De potestate absolvendi', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, ix (1973), no. 453, 421–3; B.P. McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation* (University Park, PA, 2005), 309.

73 Avignon, BM, MS 329, fols 2r–31r; Avignon, BM, MS 1098, fols 13r–42r. Both these manuscripts later found their way into the collections of the Celestines of Avignon.

74 Jean Gerson, 'Regulae morales' (= 'Regulae mandatorum'), in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, ix (1973), no. 434, 94–132; McGuire, *Jean Gerson*, 218–19.

75 Gerson, 'Regulae morales', 101, cited in McGuire, *Jean Gerson*, 218.

been seen in the previous chapter, but there is greater depth to uncover. Throughout his literary output, he juxtaposed a scrupulous ascetic concern to separate the pure from the impure with moderating strains concerning interior balance and communal harmony.

The works of Pierre Pocquet

Editing Cassian's *Conferences* and Climacus's *Ladder of Perfection*

Pocquet's literary output consists of two parts: adaptations of older works, and new compositions. The first category comprises a redaction of John Cassian's *Conferences* and categorized extracts from John Climacus's *Ladder of Perfection*. The former, written c.420 was a foundational text for Western monasticism, detailing the conversations the author and his friend Germanus held with Egyptian ascetics before he settled in Marseille; the latter, written c.600, was, as mentioned earlier, a classic of Eastern monasticism but unknown in Latin prior to the fourteenth century and still a rarity in Pocquet's time. Together, however, they tell us much about the care which Pocquet took over the spiritual education of his monks.⁷⁶ These adaptations of older works seem to have been aimed at the formation of monks who were only partially educated, most likely novices and the newly professed. As he wrote at the outset of the *Conferences*, he had rendered Cassian's words in 'unrefined and clear Latin', 'since to some, the *Conferences* of the Fathers seem obscure due to difficulties of material and Latinity'.⁷⁷ His extracts from the *Ladder of Perfection* likewise place accessibility to the

76 The *Conferences* are found in: Paris, BA, MS 485, fols 11r–134r (turn of the 15th century, Celestines of Paris, probably original); Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18330, fols 124r–247r (completed in 1450, Celestines of Lyon); Avignon, BM, MS 6153 fols 66r–155v (15th century, Celestines of Avignon); Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 1361 (completed in 1469, Augustines of St Paul, Besançon, attributed to N. Giraud); and Toulouse, Archives départementales de Haute-Garonne, MS 2, fols 22r–153r (early 15th century?, attributed to Jean, monk of Beaumetz). The Climacus extracts have only one exemplar: the same manuscript as the earliest Celestine witness for the *Conferences*, Paris, BA, MS 485, fols 134v–197v. This manuscript also contains a short collection of authorities from other texts following this work in the same hand: it is not attributed to Pocquet, although this is far from impossible. The Arsenal compilation as a unity deserves further consideration than can be given here. On their attribution to Pocquet, see Caudron, 'Poquet (Pocquet, Pierre)', 1925; Lamy, 'Pierre Poquet', 397–8, 401–2.

77 Paris, BA, MS 485, fol. 1r: 'Quia aliquibus collationes patrum videntur obscure propter difficultates materie et latinitatis, ideo istas modicas compilationes, deo adiuvante, extrahere curavi in rudi et claro latino.'

fore. Finding that the original would ‘speak of many matters in one and the same step or chapter’, Pocquet dispensed with its structure entirely: ‘I have extracted authorities from this book [...] placing them in alphabetical order under certain words, so that each matter might likewise be more easily found.’⁷⁸ His efforts in opening up these classics of desert monasticism – one well known, one still very rare in Latin – and quite possibly intentionally combining them (the earliest, possibly original, Celestine witness of the *Conferences* also contains the Climacus extracts) – suggest a particular desire to make that ancient atmosphere and its demands accessible to a rather more bourgeois religious culture. As one might expect, promoting ascetic efforts was key. This much is clear enough in how Pocquet organized his extracts from Climacus. The majority of its headings have a pre-eminent emphasis on capital sins, penance and punishment, and physical attributes associated with purity: for instance, ‘abstinence’, ‘avarice’, ‘blasphemy’, ‘chastity’, ‘confession’, ‘correction and censure’, ‘vain glory’, ‘appetite’, ‘humility’, ‘instability’, ‘anger’, ‘judgment of the reckless’, ‘grief and compunction’, ‘hate’, ‘prayer’, ‘sin’, ‘penitence’, ‘sleep and vigils’, ‘dreams’, ‘pride’, ‘silence’, ‘temptation’.

But there was certainly more to his work than simply providing tradition to their harsh ascetic and penitential observances. In part, these works did give those aspects a greater depth of meaning, especially on a positive scale, holding out the promise of a spiritual ascent through their labours. But in reminding monks that the latter were means, rather than ends, they also warned against black-and-white asceticism becoming a conduit of internal strife and anger. Tellingly, Pocquet gave the seventh chapter of Cassian’s first conference with Moyses (traditionally titled ‘On seeking tranquillity of heart’) a more precise summary: ‘That corporal exercises should not be done unless for purity of heart’. While reflective of the content of the original chapter, this feels as if it were a specific reference to the particular acerbity and inflexibility of Celestine observance, especially since Pocquet only occasionally provided chapter headings, and altered them even less.⁷⁹ The first conference with Abbot Joseph in Cassian’s work gave Pocquet the opportunity to outline the necessity of both inner peace and amity and concord between brothers. Again, he included chapter headings only

78 Ibid., fol. 134v: ‘Cum liber sancti johannis scolastici dicti climaci constet ex triginta gradibus cum capitulo “ad pastorem” et sepe in uno eodemque gradu seu capitulo loquatur de diversis materiis: ea propter extraxi auctoritates ipsius libri ad unum propositum facientes per ordinem alphabeti sub certis dictionibus ut facilius unaqueque materia simul reperiat.’

79 Paris, BA, MS 485, fol. 2v: ‘Quod corporales exercitationes non debent fieri nisi pro puritate cordis’; cf. Cassian, *Collationes*, i.7: *PL*, xlix, 489–90.

selectively, suggesting that they held particular importance to him: 'that nothing is to be preferred to charity and nothing to be set aside more than anger' (c.7), 'on the best manner and example for making peace' (c.25), 'how anger should be restrained' (c.26). He also drew out a chapter that described the virtue of being open to counsel from one's peers and juniors: 'that minors should not be treated with contempt in discussions, *since God sometimes reveals to them things that he does not to seniors*' (c.12), the italicized clause being Pocquet's own addition to the title.⁸⁰

A model of discretion that was closely tied to listening to one's brothers is again given prominence in his treatment of Climacus. The extracts under the heading of *discretio* make the point firmly. Following his source closely, Pocquet first declared that discretion – 'a certain knowledge in all times and things of the will of God' – required the mortification of one's own will. For the next step towards this goal, however, Pocquet skipped ahead to Climacus's words on 'expert discernment'. This was found in 'asking with true and simple faith, without contempt, the minds of one's fathers or even one's brothers', and heeding their advice, 'even if they should not seem entirely spiritual': 'for God is not so unjust as to seduce minds humbling themselves in faith and innocence to the counsel and judgment of a neighbour'.⁸¹ Such words are set nearby to extracts on 'obedience', a 'depositing of hesitation and discretion' that would seem to strengthen the authority of anointed superiors:⁸² but overall, it is a sense of mutual submission that shines through. While he was central in strengthening the French Celestine hierarchy, Pocquet seemed happy to present a somewhat more fluid spiritual logic of obedience, with all humbling themselves before the advice of others. Here it was drawn from Eastern monastic tradition, but it was also naturally aligned with the concern over office-holders and the praise of renunciation that were deeply embedded in the Celestines' own past.

80 Paris, BA, MS 485, fols 97r, 97v, 101r; for the latter example, compare Pocquet's title 'Quod minore non debent in collatione contemptu, quod aliquando deus revelat, quod non revelat maioribus' with that in *PL*, xlix, 1026: 'Quam ob causam non debeant inferiores in collatione contemni'.

81 Paris, BA, MS 485, fol. 143v: 'Quicumque voluntatem domini discere volunt et eius uniplacitum suas ipsorum voluntates et complacencias prius mortificare et ne care tenentur et debent: fide vero et simplicitate absque malignitate patrum animas aut eciam fratrum exorantes atque in humilitate cordis et in hesitanti coitatione interrogantes tanquam ex ore dei ab ipsis consulta suscipiunt quamvis contraria eorum sensui intentioni et affectioni dicta seu consulta existant: eciam si non totaliter spirituales sint qui interrogati sunt. Non enim iniustus est deus ut seducat animas se ipsas fide et innocencia proximi consilio et iudicio humiliantes.' *PG*, lxxxviii, 1058.

82 *Ibid.*, fol. 160r: 'Obediencia est depositio hesitationis et discretionis'. *PG*, lxxxviii, 679.

Overall, flexibility in practice would seem to be one of the key lessons of these editions, drawn from an age when the majority of monks did not live under a formal ‘rule’ and when the norms of community and authority were less consistent than they would be following the construction of religious orders. The search for purity these works presented could still take more black-and-white tones and their authors did not deny the importance of institutions: Cassian’s *Conferences* were in fact a companion to his *Institutes*, which provided a far more practical framework for monastic life and the organization of monasteries.⁸³ Nevertheless, the true humility they sought to inculcate entailed a deeper, interior understanding of spiritual goals and even irenic touches. The original works of Pierre Pocquet underline the point that such ideas were far from accidental inheritances. These also brought forth an affective emphasis which was more muted in these early ascetic texts,⁸⁴ but which pervaded the religious atmosphere of the time.

The Orationarium in vita Domini nostri Jesu Christi et de suffragiis sanctorum: building the inner man and communities at peace

Pocquet’s popular *Orationarium in vita Domini nostri Jesu Christi et de suffragiis sanctorum* has already been briefly discussed in the previous chapter but deserves greater consideration here regarding the totality of its import for Celestine monastic life. It has been seen, in part, to reflect the tough, rigorous asceticism which the ‘Observant’ French Celestines proposed under Pocquet’s guidance. Its harsh tones concerning the denial of luxuries and bodily mortification should not be forgotten as part of his outlook. But if such physical efforts were critical to achieving ‘cleanliness of heart’ and could even play their part in man’s reformist path, here too they do not appear as the ends of observance.

As is clear from the mention of the *vita Christi* in title alone, the text itself is evidently not a handbook of ascetic and penitential dictats, but a devotional text first and foremost. It sat within a broader trend of late medieval piety that focused on the humanity of Jesus. It is similar in overall structure and style to the more well-known *Meditationes vitae Christi* of pseudo-Bonaventure (early fourteenth century), and to a lesser extent the contemporary but more scholarly *Vita Christi* of the Carthusian Ludolph of Saxony (completed in 1374), but certainly rather different from the more

83 John Cassian, *The Institutes*, trans B. Ramsey (New York, 2000).

84 D. Boquet and P. Nagy, *Sensible Moyen Âge: une histoire des émotions dans l’Occident médiéval* (Paris, 2015), 55–63.

controversial and polemical *Arbor vitae* of the Spiritual Franciscan Ubertino da Casale.⁸⁵ Its first and largest part (thirty-six chapters on the life of Christ) treats briefly of general spiritual counsels and the Fall before proceeding on to an imaginative gospel concordance traced from the incarnation of Christ through to the coming of the Holy Spirit. Along the way, it provides affective narratives, meditations, and prayers.⁸⁶ More unusually, it also covers the virtues of other figures of devotion in its second part (*de suffragiis sanctorum*). Mary occupies pride of place, but several categories follow thereafter: angels, Old Testament saints, John the Baptist, the apostles and evangelists, martyrs, confessors and other virgins.⁸⁷ Another distinguishing factor is apparent even from the key descriptor of its title: it is an *orationarium*. Prayer is at its heart, even more so than with Ludolph's *Vita Christi*.⁸⁸ every passage concludes with one or more prayers, sometimes categorized (*oratio pro* (subject matter)), sometimes not (*oratio, alia oratio*). This is not to say it is solely a prayer book. Prayers are always preceded by significant exegetical passages, which often have a pronounced moral focus. Between them, one sometimes finds 'meditations', which asked the reader to breathe in deeply from both the narrative and the preceding lessons. But prayers always completed the process. Above all, however, its distinctiveness lies in how tightly this material is woven into the concerns of the French Celestines and their environment, of which a little has already been seen. While he drew from more time-honoured sources, particularly the *Glossa ordinaria* on the Bible and the works of John Cassian, the way Pocquet constructed his *Orationarium* often draws the eye to the contemporary world that the French Celestines inhabited.

The introduction to the *Orationarium* touches on similar themes to those of the more well-known *Meditationes vitae Christi* and Ludolph's *Vita Christi* – Christ's life as living example and the importance and benefits of interior meditation upon it –, but Pocquet's avowed purpose distinguishes

85 *Meditationes vitae Christi*, ed. M. Stallings-Taney (Turnhout, 1997); Ludolph of Saxony, *Vita Christi*, ed. L.M. Rigollot, 4 vols (Paris, 1878); Ubertino da Casale, *Arbor vitae crucifixe Jesu*, ed. C.T. Davis (Turin, 1961). On these texts and Christocentric piety more generally, see M. Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 2011), especially 111–78; S. McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia, 2009); C.A. Conway, *The Vita Christi of Ludolph of Saxony and Late Medieval Devotion Centred on the Incarnation* (Salzburg, 1976). See also the brief description of Pocquet's work in Lamy, 'Pierre Poquet', 398–9.

86 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18206, fols 1r–139r.

87 Ibid., fols 139r–154v.

88 *Praying the Life of Christ: first English translation of the prayers concluding the 181 chapters of the Vita Christi of Ludolphus the Carthusian*, ed. M.I. Bodendstedt (Salzburg, 1973).

itself immediately in its particular sensitivity to those in his spiritual care. He introduced the work as a direct response to real questions and concerns over the ‘inner man’ that had been put to him: ‘Often I am asked to show how a simple religious ought best to manage himself with regard to the inner man, and how he should use the time which remains to him, beyond necessary occupations, in the praise of God and towards the health of the soul.’⁸⁹ Here one finds an immediate recognition that the observance mandated by the constitutions might not on its own be enough for personal spiritual satisfaction, a concern which was not just his, but also raised by his fellow monks. Partly it was a matter of using the time that remained to monks beyond the ‘necessary occupations’ of their observance productively. But the concern over the ‘inner man’ suggests that there was something deeper which remained to be provided, something which rote, strict observance might not have always been able to deliver on the level of experience, however much it was cited as a theoretical path of personal and communal reform.

It is a statement that had an obvious model and one that was clearly well known to Pocquet. Cassian’s preface to his *Conferences* contrasted his *Institutes* with his new work: ‘let us move from the external and visible life of the monks, which we set out in the previous books [*Institutes*], to the invisible character of the inner man.’⁹⁰ Pocquet did not include this statement in his own redaction of the *Conferences*. While we do not know which text he produced first, his view in educating his charges would seem to have been that they ultimately needed their own, tailored instruction for the inner man, even if Cassian was deemed to be very useful.⁹¹ Such an idea is suggested by the fact that the introduction makes the contrast with the formalities of their lives in stronger terms than Cassian ever needed to:

Since divine reading, meditation, and prayer make the mind adhere to God, an aim towards which all religious should strive, and considering also that every act of Christ is our instruction and that His life contains the perfect form of spiritual life, to which, as the truest norm, any faithful man and especially any religious ought to regulate his life – and he will need no other book – thus I undertake to intimate how we ought to read,

89 Ibid., fol. 1r: ‘Sepe rogatus sum, ut quomodo simplex religiosus debeat potissime quantum ad interiorem hominem se habere, et tempus quod extra necessarias occupationes sibi restat ad laudem dei et salutem anime expendere aperirem.’

90 John Cassian, *The Conferences* (New York, 1997), 30.

91 Pocquet did caveat his *Orationarium* with the following statement: ‘multi docti et experti hoc plenissime docuerunt, quorum ego imperitus non sum dignus esse discipulus’ (Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18206, fol. 1r). He may well have had the *Conferences* in mind.

meditate, and pray upon the life of our Saviour, as He Himself will deem fitting to show us.⁹²

At one level, this is a classic description of the interior life ('divine reading, meditation, and prayer'), with the *imitatio Christi* at its heart: this was a spiritual path that was open to every Christian, even if it was especially incumbent on religious, as Pocquet noted. Nevertheless, his words are pointed when read from a Celestine perspective. It is hard to imagine that monks would have been able to read Pocquet's strong declaration that they would ultimately 'need no other book' by which to 'regulate' (*regulare*) their lives without reflecting on the meaning of their own 'regular observance'.

The discussion of devotional method that follows this paragraph – the way in which one approached 'making the mind adhere to God' – takes against formalism from another direction. One was to read inwardly, referring also to the scriptures to avoid errors, to meditate upon what was read, and then to pray, not out loud, but within the mind. This meditative brand of prayer, felt deeply within rather than simply performed by rote, Pocquet declared to be 'better than' vocal prayer in 'joining us to God': its promotion was the 'principal intention' of his work.⁹³ There was nothing new or remarkable in celebrating the power of mental prayer for a contemplative's ascent – it is discussed in Cassian's ninth Conference, and his preface, which contrasts 'canonical prayer' with 'perpetual prayer', and seems to imply something similar –, nor was Pocquet necessarily denying the usefulness of vocal prayer in bringing others to devotion or in exciting one's own, as Aquinas defended.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the elevation of interior over vocal prayer for this purpose was one that was not made so explicit in earlier *vitae Christi*.

92 Ibid., fol. 1r–v: 'Igitur attendens quod lectio divina, meditacio, et oracio, faciunt mentem deo iugiter inherere, ad quod debet tendere quilibet religiosus, considerans etiam quod omnis christi actio est nostra instructio, et vita ipsius perfectam continet vite spiritualis formam, ad quam tanquam ad verissimam normam quilibet fidelis et maxime religiosus vitam suam debet regulare, et alio libro nullatenus indigebit. Idcirco qualiter circa vitam nostri salvatoris debemus legere meditari et orare, prout ipse donare dignabitur intimare curabo.'

93 Ibid., fol. 1v: 'Verum quia lectio sanctissime vite eius in evangelis sanctis sufficienter est descripta, ad scripturam ipsorum recurre et in memoria tua pro posse reponere, ut in ea intus legere valeas, quia sic circa ipsarum melius meditaberis et orabis. Et quia meditatio vera presupponit lectionem ab ecclesia catholica approbatam, ne aliter in errorem et vanitates induceret, ideo cum meditari volueris, prius ad talem lectionem interiorem in memoria tua reservatam recurre, et cum humilitate et puritate semper auxilio dei invocato de ea meditationem facias et deinde orationem. Ac vero quia oracio magis iungit nos deo quam lectio, vel meditatio, et magis oratio mentalis quam vocalis, ideo de oratione mentali est principalis huius opusculi intentio.'

94 PL, xlix, 480; For a host of medieval authorities supporting the use of interior prayer, see A. Poulain, *The Graces of Interior Prayer* (London, 1921); Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2-2.83.12.

Rather its appearance here, indeed as the ‘principal intention’ of the text, must surely be set against the context of the Celestine practice of extensive vocal prayer.

Especially when combined with the vivid, affective narrative of Christ’s life that the *Orationarium* provides, such an approach to the inner man seems as if designed to offer a practical balance to the potential for monotony in the Celestines’ constitutional observance. But this stress on quietly and carefully imploring God in one’s heart in the aim of a ‘joining us to God’ also came with a significance for salvation and reform. The importance of defined practical efforts in this is not ignored: there is an ordered meticulousness to the path of reading, reflecting, returning to reading, meditating and then praying that actually reminds the reader of Pocquet’s other, more legalistic guise. Overall, however, in ‘always calling upon God’s aid’, the guidance in the *Orationarium* places the emphasis firmly back on the necessity of God’s grace.

The latter point was, on one level, simply the orthodoxy of post-Pelagian Christianity, but also one that Pocquet felt the need to hammer home again and again. Expanding on the subject of interior prayer in the second chapter, he called upon his readers to ‘stand in penitence in the presence of divine majesty and know that God inspects you and your thoughts and will know them at all times’. They were to ‘trust in His mercy alone, and not in their own justice’ and thus not to ‘attend to the words of prayer, but to the mind’, that is to say one’s inner disposition and intention.⁹⁵

Through the narrative of Christ’s life, Pocquet applied this same message to all manner of moral issues. In the story of Mary and Joseph finding Jesus in the temple, for instance, he again took care to outline how the faithful and repentant in heart could expect consolation. His narrative is longer and contains greater affective depth than earlier *vita Christi* models. The parents were filled with great sadness at the loss of Jesus on the road away from Jerusalem, and spent a night filled with ‘many tears’, ‘sorrowful groans’ and ‘sobs and sighs’.⁹⁶ Pocquet surmised that they feared the possibility

95 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18206, fol. 6r: ‘Hoc autem scire debes quod in orationibus predictis et sequentibus, debes cogitare coram maiestate divina penitentialiter te stare, et deum te et cogitationes tuas inspicere et pro cetero scire. Ideo humiliter et verecundius quam poteris ipsum invoca et de tua iusticia diffidens in sola eius misericordia spera. Nec ad verba orationis attendas sed ad mentem. Qui enim verborum ornatu querit in oratione, deum immaterialem et incorporeum immaterialiter seu spiritualiter orare non potest qui mentem et cor scrutatur et non verbum.’

96 Ibid., fol. 33v: ‘in sompnem duxerunt illam dolorisissimam noctem genitus dantens et lacrimas doloris emittentes, afflicti, angustati, in dolore et erumpna et tribulatione maxima pre omnibus diebus vite sue.’

that Herod or his ministers might have found the lost child and that ‘thus, on account of their bad custody, they [the parents] would have caused the death of the boy Jesus’: this would not only have been a terrible loss, but potentially a grave sin on their account.⁹⁷ But they repented through ‘faithful pleas of the heart’ and it was through this, according to Pocquet, that consolation came. It was an example for all to behold:

Through this we are taught that we ought not to be bewildered nor despair if, in doing well, we suffer disturbances. Rather, humbly imploring consolation from God, we should wait patiently. And in prosperity we should likewise fear misfortune. And thus there should neither be fear without hope nor hope without fear, but holding as it were the middle ground, we should both place our hope in God and distrust ourselves, always calling on His aid.⁹⁸

The fact that a long passage aimed primarily at allaying the fears of its readers ends with a somewhat jarring warning concerning one’s own reliability (‘distrust ourselves’) is significant: in fact, it closely echoes the previously discussed passage concerning prayer. The presence of too much fear was one of Pocquet’s human concerns; too much self-righteousness was another, and understandably so given what has been seen of French Celestine observance.

Both concerns, but perhaps especially the latter, were prominent in his treatment of the Sermon on the Mount. His analysis here goes far beyond the simpler treatment found in the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes*, focused on ‘poverty of spirit’ and the Lord’s Prayer alone.⁹⁹ The lengthy treatment provided by Ludolph of Saxony presents a closer parallel, but Pocquet’s work focuses more on moral guidance than the speculative exegesis of that earlier *vita Christi*.¹⁰⁰ The first topic in Pocquet’s treatment, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit’ (Matt. 5: 3), sets the tone, reminding its readers of a citation of Jerome in the *Glossa ordinaria*: ‘And this poverty has

97 Ibid.: ‘Forte timebant ne rex vel ministri eius cognovissent hunc esse quem herodes voluit interficere, et ipsum interfecissent, et sic pro mala custodia ipsorum essent causa mortis pueri iesu.’

98 Ibid., fol. 36r: ‘Per hoc edocemur quod non debemus mirari nec desperare si bene agentes turbationes patimur. Sed a deo consolationem humiliter implorantes patienter expectemus. Et in prosperitate adversa similiter timeamus. Et sic non sit timor sine spe, nec spes sine timore, sed quasi medium tenentes, et speremus de deo et diffidamus de nobis ipsius auxilium semper invocantes.’

99 *Meditationes vitae Christi*, 101–3.

100 Ludolph of Saxony, *Vita Christi*, i, 264–341.

two parts, as blessed Jerome said: to wit, the abdication of all things and the contrition of the spirit, so that one should believe oneself useless and inferior to others.' If, however, poverty is the 'beginning of beatitude', as was written in the gloss, Pocquet himself added that 'pride is the beginning of all sin and perdition' and that 'pride closes heaven and leads to hell'.¹⁰¹ Removing 'pride', over and above the simple 'desire for riches', is the focus of the subsequent prayer.¹⁰² Physical renunciation was critical, but meant little if it was lorded over others. His exegesis and prayers continue verse by verse: the commandments of Christ provided him with the perfect scriptural field to reinforce the expectation of divine mercy for the fearful and the suffering ('Blessed are they who mourn' (Matt. 5: 4), 'Blessed are they that suffer persecution' (Matt. 5: 10)), and especially the ideal of humility and forbearance before others. His discussion of 'Blessed are the meek' (Matt. 5: 4) enhances a citation of the *Glossa ordinaria* by adding that it meant 'stepping forth without harshness and spite of mind'.¹⁰³ In treating 'Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice' (Matt. 5: 6), Pocquet stated that 'blessed in hope are those who always seek to be filled more greatly with virtues and with a faith that works through love' (Gal. 5: 6); striving for virtue was to be balanced by a loving, caring outlook, drawing the reader's eye to concern for their brothers. And in this striving, his readers were 'always to believe themselves to be imperfect and not free from sin, and unable to have perfect justice here.'¹⁰⁴

Two verses stand out in their importance in laying out a moral, reformist direction that could rise above the dangers of fear and pride. The first is the exegesis on 'Blessed are the clean of heart' (Matt. 5: 8), which has already been referred to in the discussion of the French Celestine

101 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18206, fol. 48r: 'Et habet ista paupertas duas partes, ut dicit beatus jeronimus, scilicet abdicationem omnium rerum, et contritionem spiritus, ut se reputet inutilem et ceteris inferiorem [...] Nam sicut superbia celum claudit et ducit ad infernum, sic humilitatis paupertas illud aperit et ducit ad dominum. Et sicut timor dei est principium sapientie, ita paupertas est principium beatitudinis, sicut superbia est initium omnis peccati et perdicionis'; *Biblia latina cum glossa ordinaria*, ed. A. Rusch [1480/1481], 4 vols (Turnhout, 1992), iv, 17.

102 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18206, fol. 48r: 'nos replere tua pietate digneris, quo superbia calcare, concupias diviciarum, voluptatum honorum et proprie excellescie fugere.'

103 Ibid., fol. 48r, 'Mitis est sicut dicit glossum quem non rancor et ira afficit, et omnia equanimiter sustinet, qui propter nulla adversa animi amaritudinem ullam sentit, sed simplicitas fidei ad omnem iniuriam sustinendam instruit pacenter, sine asperitate et livore mentis existens.' See *Biblia latina cum glossa ordinaria*, iv, 17.

104 Ibid., fol. 49r: 'Beati ergo sunt in spe qui semper querunt magis virtutibus repleri et fide que per dilectionem operatur, reputantes se semper imperfectos et peccatis non carere, et perfectam iusticia hic se habere non posse.'

constitutions, due to its reflection of the hallmark ascetic scrupulosity of their religious ideal. A 'clean' or 'pure' heart, however, was evidently extremely important to Pocquet on an even deeper level. In his prologue, he had stated that 'prayer does not require the ornament of words, but the pure and upright intention of the mind, and the sacred desire of a pure heart.'¹⁰⁵ And in the very first chapter of the *Orationarium*, leading from an extract borrowed from St Bernard about how divine majesty could be perceived better through love than the intellect, Pocquet appended this distinctive emphasis: 'it can only be understood by the clean of heart; and as much as anyone understands it more, that much they have cleaned their heart, and thus, their mind: blessed indeed are the clean of heart, for they will see the Lord' (Matt. 5: 8).¹⁰⁶ The achievement of union through prayer and divine understanding was thus heavily dependent on this beatitude.

Again, Cassian's influence is clear: promoting 'purity of heart', *puritas cordis*, was the central aim of his *Conferences*, and like Pocquet's *mundicia cordis*, it had both inner and exterior connotations. Cassian may have preferred the world *puritas* to *mundicia* partly in order to put more emphasis on interior moral and spiritual aspects.¹⁰⁷ The Observant Pocquet seems to have somewhat preferred *mundicia*, perhaps because of its physical, tangible overtones, but in the discussion of this beatitude, he likewise made clear that this ascetic intensity also had to be brought within. If, on the one hand, cleanliness of heart was a matter of avoiding luxury, maintaining physical chastity and doing penance for sins, 'in another way it is received for the completion of good works in upright and pure intention.'¹⁰⁸ He went on to explain exactly what he meant by 'upright and pure intention' by reference to Paul (1 Tim. 1: 5), and, in doing so, brought in Cassian's *puritas cordis*: 'The end of the commandment is charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith.'¹⁰⁹ What Pocquet explained finally is that without any one of these elements, both

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., fol. 1v: 'Verba quippe intentioni deserviunt, non intencio verbis. Et ornatum verborum oratio non requirit. Sed puram et rectam intencionem mentis, et desiderium sanctum mundi cordis.'

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., fol. 5r: 'Que a solis mundis corde intelligi potest, et tanto quisque eam plus cognoscit, quanto magis cor idest mentem suam mundavit. Beati enim mundo corde qui ipsi domini videbint.'

¹⁰⁷ C. Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford, 1998), 43.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., fol. 50r: 'Alio modo accipitur pro complectione bonorum operum recta et pure intentione factorum.'

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.: 'iuxta illud, finis autem precepti est caritas de corde puro et conscientia bona et fide non ficta.'

those which seem to relate more to physical practice and to charitable intention, cleanliness of heart was compromised.¹¹⁰ The sum total put having a 'clean heart' at the core of Pocquet's monastic aspirations. It stood as a demand not only for rigorous physical purity but for love, for a charitable spirit, and, as a goal, extended the promise of both defence against sin and reformist perfection.

In his discussion of 'Blessed are the peacemakers' (Matt. 5: 9) the language of strict observance returns, but in a different context, that of divine law: 'and in the observance of God's commands and meditation on divine law one is strengthened, according to the saying "much peace have they that love thy law"' (Ps. 118: 165).¹¹¹ Such tones might have reminded monks of the importance of their strict observance to the path of reform. But Pocquet's words also would have left the monks to conclude that such observance had to conform to an underlying, divine law, which tended towards peace. The subsequent prayer joins both inner peace and peace among brothers together: 'Irradiate our minds with the gift of wisdom, so that with all vices expelled, which divide us from you and us against ourselves, we might taste how sweet you are, o Lord.'¹¹²

If Cassian had purity of heart as his prime beatitudinal goal, Pocquet ultimately came to give peace an equal footing. The latter's importance perhaps lay in its ability to bridge the gap between individual and community: in Pocquet's treatment, its necessity reached to the furthest horizons of Christian society. In the world beyond their walls, Pocquet saw the individual uncleanness of man's conceited and avaricious nature as central in causing the Schism, as seen in the previous chapter. Peace and unity were in return necessary for a Church 'thoroughly cleansed of vices'. Describing the fate of Christ's tunic after his death, those who 'tore the unity of the Church apart' are stated to be 'worse' than the Roman soldiers who divided the garments, but did not tear the tunic. Pocquet begged that such men would realize how much evil they had caused through division and hoped that one true pope

110 Ibid.: 'Accipitur autem hic mundicia cordis, pro mundicia quasi ex omnibus predictis mundiciis coadiuvata, quia cor idest mens mundatur, et clarificatur, ad videndum deum et ardentissime diligendum, quod fieri non potest si intellectus per hereses aut infidelitates et similia oberret aut si peccatum in se retineat, aut si bona intencione bona que potest non operetur, aut si gule vel luxurie se dederit, sed per purgationem viciorum et operationem bonorum propter deum factorum et per castitatem atque temperanciam cor mundatur et clarificatur.'

111 Ibid., fol. 50v: 'Et in observatione mandatorum dei, et meditatione legis divine roboratur, iuxta illud, Pax multa diligentibus legem tuam.'

112 Ibid., fol. 51r: 'dono sapientie mentem nostrum irradiat, quo omnibus expulsiis viciis quo dividerunt nos a te et nos contra nosmet ipsos, gustare valeamus quam suavis es domine.'

might be able to bring 'peace and true union', and thus 'expel simony' and 'remove avarice, pride, pomp, gluttony, and all indecency'.¹¹³

If the necessity of both 'cleanliness of heart' and 'peace' gained strength from their relevance to the world at large, however, the ideological amalgam they each represented seems to have been shaped by the need to find internal balance. Both in one way or another led back to strict observance, whether as a guard against the filth of the world or as the desired outcome of observing law, but both also led beyond: inner cleanliness had to go hand in hand with physical cleanliness, while peace drew the eye to an overriding divine law. In the intertwining of the two, Pocquet seems to have found the right balance both to explain French Celestine observance and to make an attempt at mitigating its tensions.

The second chapter on Christ's preaching makes the latter point extremely obvious. Here Pocquet no longer followed Matthew verse by verse as in the chapter on the beatitudes, skipping over some topics, especially those 'which to us religious are less appropriate' – for instance, murder, divorce and fulfilment of the Old Law – in favour of others. Pocquet chose not only to pick out a number of the moral concerns that he had already treated, but to produce prayers that revolve heavily around his two key beatitudes, albeit here preferring 'purity of heart' to 'cleanliness of heart'. Pocquet's prayer on Matt. 6: 1 expands on Christ's saying, 'Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them': he adds that justice is to be understood here as 'works that are good in *genus* (*id est, bona opera ex genere*)', and thus not necessarily in intention. As his prayer continued, 'allow us to do these things in right intention and pure heart on account of you, rather than outwardly seek vain praises'.¹¹⁴ This passage is immediately followed by another prayer on the manner of prayer itself: 'grant us right intention and purity of heart by removing all superstition and superfluity'.¹¹⁵ With the verse 'whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment' (Matt. 5: 22),

113 Ibid., fol. 103r: 'Et utinam saperent et intelligerent quantorum sunt causa malorum, et sorte divina ad unum solum perveneret superna dignitas ecclesie, qui eam in pace et vera unione deo in se operante servaret, de ea symonem expelleret ambicionem avariciam, superbiam, pompam, gulam, et omnem turpitudinem ab ea removeret, eamque cunctis viciis emundatam decore virtutum adornaret.'

114 Ibid., fol. 53r: 'O finis rectus propter quem omnia fienda sunt domine iesu christe qui dixisti attendite ne iusticiam vestrum, id est bona opera ex genere, faciatis coram hominibus ut videamini ab eis, da nobis bona bene agere et humiliter orare, ut recta intentione et puro corde propter te illa faciamus et laudes vanas exterius non queramus.'

115 Ibid.: 'O sancte et vere orationis inspirator, et dator domine iesu qui dixisti non esse in oratione multum loquendum nobis inspira spiritum quomodo te orare debeamus, et rectam intencionem puritatemque cordis nobis tribue, omnemque supersticionem et superfluitatem

‘peace’ returns in the associated ‘prayer for concord among brothers (*oratio pro concordia fratrum*)’: ‘Fill us with your peace and make us agreeable and peaceful towards our brothers, so that we are not angry at them and do not make any insult or injury whatsoever in sign, word, or deed, nor hold a grudge, disdain, or hate against them.’¹¹⁶ His prayer on Matt. 5: 39 (‘if one strikes thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other’) again makes the link between peaceful outcomes and divine law: ‘and what we do not want to be done to us, we should not do to others, so that fulfilling your law, we may be deemed worthy of your peace.’¹¹⁷ His prayers on Matt. 5: 29 (‘if thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out’ – a ‘prayer against scandal’, *oratio contra scandalum*) and Matt. 5: 44 (‘love your enemy, do good to those that hate you’), bring home similar messages of forbearance towards one’s brother.¹¹⁸ Naturally, he could hardly skip over ‘do not judge lest ye be judged, for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged’ (Matt. 7: 1–2). Here, he presented a model for discretion, a key tool towards purity of heart for Cassian. Pocquet, however, implicitly directed his model as much towards the underlying law of communal peace in a discussion that centred on appropriate fraternal correction: ‘If cause arises, with our mind’s eye cleaned from all impurity and illuminated by the light of truth, and in accordance with your teaching, as appropriate and at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner, we should piously censure, reprove, and mercifully call them towards emendation and salvation with your help.’¹¹⁹

The passion narrative of the *Orationarium* appears less remarkable in its content. It is less consistently focused on moral advice than the long extract concerning the preaching of Jesus. Nevertheless, Pocquet continued to exhort his readers to trust in divine mercy, brought to fruition through Christ’s own sacrifice, rather than their own virtue. If Peter himself could not always avoid sin, then what hope did the monks have: ‘From this example it

removendo, quatinus tibi simplici et vero deo vere et sincere supplicare valeamus quod tibi placitum fuerit postulando et petita tua clemencia obtinendo amen.’

116 Ibid., fol. 52r: ‘fac nos tua pace repleti, et erga fratres nostros concordēs et pacatos ut eis non irascamur nec aliquam contumeliam seu iniuriam signis verbis aut factis aliquatenus faciamus nec rancorem aut indignationem vel odium contra ipsos habeamus sed quique contra nos deliquerunt veraciter remittamus nec occasionem quod erga nos habeant tribuamus.’

117 Ibid., fol. 52v: ‘et quod non debemus nobis velle fieri, nec alius faciamus, ut legem tuam implentes, pacem tuam habere mereamur.’

118 Ibid., fol. 52r–v.

119 Ibid., fols 54v–55r: ‘sed purgato mentis oculo ab omni inquinamento et lumine veritatis illustrato, si causa exigit, secundum preceptum tuum caritative, sicut oportet et quando et quomodo oportet pie corripimus et arguamus et misericorditer ad emendationem et salutem tuo auxilio eos provocemus.’

is clear that no one is secure on their own account, when the future prince of the Church [Peter] could not stand as such. Nevertheless, no one should despair after sin, but rather return to penitence and trust in the mercy of the Lord.¹²⁰ If, as seen earlier, the former lawyer showed his respect for Roman law in condemning Pilate, he reminded his readers in the subsequent prayer of their own injustice: 'Oh good Jesus, most just judge and the most upright of all the living and the dead, you who for us, unjust and unworthy sinners, were so unjustly and irregularly sentenced to death on the cross and delivered to the will of your enemies, by virtue of these things free us from the hands of our visible and invisible enemies of mind and body so that we can serve you worthily in sanctity and justice for all of our days.'¹²¹ In the latter part of the work (on the 'suffrages of the saints'), Pocquet's prayer to St Benedict was one of repentance for failing to observe the Rule: 'Oh blessed father, I, miserable, bearing the monastic state in name alone, have often transgressed your Rule by not adapting my behaviour to it, instead living in a worldly manner in the monastery, so that I cannot raise my eyes to you without shame.'¹²²

The reformist goals of 'cleanliness of heart' and 'peace' – as well as their sinful opposites – re-emerge, however, in one of Pocquet's more important breaks from the narrative, his discussion of the Eucharist, which follows his retelling of the Last Supper. Here, Pocquet tackled the question of what made one unworthy to receive communion. Faithlessness is top of his list: 'contempt of God' and 'blasphemy' naturally made one unworthy. But beyond this obvious caveat comes the hatred of one's brother, since 'the mystery to be venerated is the union of charity and the peace of the sacraments'. Finally, there is the 'stench of lust', since the sacrament was one of 'purity and cleanliness': a man who came 'shabbily dressed in lust of mind or body', did not respect Christ, and essentially 'threw His most sacred body into a sewer'. All other mortal sins likewise made one unworthy, but these sins

120 Ibid., fol. 88v: 'Exemplo cuius patet quod nullus debet de se esse securus, si princeps ecclesie futurus stare non potuerit. Et quod eciam nullus debet post peccatum desperare, sed ad penitenciam debet redire et in domini misericordia sperare.'

121 Ibid., fol. 98r–v: 'O iudex iustissime et piissime vivorum et mortuorum bone iesu qui pro nobis iniustus et indignis peccatoribus morti crucis tam iniuste et inordinate adiudicatus et tuorum inimicorum voluntati traditus fuisti, per horum virtutem de manibus inimicorum nostrorum visibilibus et invisibilibus mentis et corporis, nos libera ut digne serviamus in sanctitate et iusticia omnibus dies nostris.'

122 Ibid., fol. 151r: 'O beate pater ego miser nominetenus monachatum gerens, tociens regulam tuam transgressus sum secundum eam mores non mutando, sed in monasterio seculariter vivendo, quod ad te oculos meos non nisi cum verecundia levare possum.'

– i.e. those that impeded not only divine truth but also ‘cleanliness’ and ‘peace’ – made one ‘more unworthy’ than the rest.¹²³

In one image, Pocquet’s moral complexity in the *Orationarium* comes into full view. More rigid ideas concerning sin emerge strongly in his words on ‘cleanliness’ and ‘purity’, although he again provided an interior focus alongside them (‘of mind or body’). Peace, which he had cited earlier as the aim of observing God’s law, is here described as an avoidance of ‘hate’ and ‘rancour’ towards others. It was through these terms, which at once led towards and away from the strict observance of precept, that he chose to treat a sacrament that was likewise both strictly observed among the Celestines in their formal observance, but which also represented the gift of God’s mercy and grace to man. Through such tones, the *Orationarium* wove a vision that both justified their rigours, but also allowed for its moderation under certain circumstances: amid the quandaries of Celestine observance, Pocquet attempted both to cajole, supporting the constitutions, and console, presaging the answers that both he and Gerson gave at the *Quodlibeta*.

St Joseph – a model for monastic superiors?

Another feature of Pocquet’s writing should also be drawn out: a focus on the role of St Joseph within the Holy Family that was almost unprecedented.¹²⁴ Here we find Pocquet alongside Gerson again, as in the *Quodlibeta*, but in this case it is the former who seems to take the lead. When Gerson’s interest in Joseph first announces itself in a letter to John, duke of Berry, in 1413, he mentions the already dead Pocquet (d.1408, here named Pierre Bourguignon) along with three others, Pierre d’Ailly (d.1420), Henri Chicot (a canon of Chartres, d. c.1413) and Clement VII (d.1394), as having already taken up the devotion.¹²⁵ Pocquet, in fact, may well have preceded the other three men: no written work

123 Ibid., fols 76v–77r: ‘Et quamvis omne peccatum mortale indignum faciat hominem ad recipiendum istud sanctissimum sacramentum, tamen infidelitas maxime, propter hoc quod includit blasphemiam et contemptum dei ut dixi. Et odium fratrum rancor et ira quia hoc venerandum misterium est unionis caritatis et pacis sacramentum. Ideo dominus specialiter prohibet tales accedere ad altare donec reconciliati fuerint fratri suo. Similiter fetor luxurie, quia istud sacramentum est puritatis et mundicie et maiorem irreverenciam facit christo qui in anima et corpore sordidatus luxuria proicit corpus suum sanctissimum quam si in cloacam proiceret quam est de se et per se. Et quicumque in quocunque mortali peccato actu vel voluntate faciendi scienter manet indignus est simpliciter ad receptionem istius sacramenti, quamvis maxime propter predicta peccata indignior sit.’

124 See more broadly Payan, *Joseph*.

125 Jean Gerson, ‘À Jean, duc de Berry, Paris, 1413’, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, ii (1960), no. 33, 155–7; Lieberman, ‘Pierre Pocquet’, 1–14.

on Joseph survives from the latter two, and for Pierre d'Ailly, only his undated *De duodecim honoribus Sancti Josephi*, a short list of conclusions confirming Joseph's sanctity, is known.¹²⁶ Pocquet's interest, on the other hand, announces itself for certain in the *Orationarium* (c.1380s, pre-1391) and then in the undated *Dictamen de laudibus Josephi*, a poem of far greater complexity than d'Ailly's work and one that, as recent research has suggested, could easily have been his source.¹²⁷ Pocquet also represents a very plausible conduit between the Avignonese papal circles that Henri Chicot and Clement VII inhabited and the Paris-centred world of Jean Gerson and Pierre d'Ailly; he was the provincial prior who sent twelve religious to populate the Avignon house in 1393 and had presumably been involved in negotiations with Clement VII, its founder.¹²⁸ Whatever the case, Pocquet's treatment of St Joseph was no simple lifting of a devotion, but a deployment of something rather novel to meet contextual needs: he found within Joseph's example a response to Celestine cloistral concerns.

Joseph's importance within Pocquet's thought was multifaceted. It has been seen in the *Orationarium* how the story of Joseph and Mary losing Jesus in the temple allowed the writer to stress the certainty of mercy for the repentant and the dependence of man's own justice on God's grace. Within Joseph himself, moreover, Pocquet found an example that allowed him to weave together much of the moral guidance seen thus far. His extensive treatment in the *Orationarium* of Joseph's doubt over Mary's honesty and chastity at the conception of Jesus (Matt. 1: 19) – which went far beyond earlier models – allowed him to present a model of discretion:

He decided to send her [Mary] away secretly, through this being mindful of his wife, so that if she were an adulteress, she would feel ashamed and do penance for the sin. But he was also mindful of himself lest, if she were innocent, he should make an innocent perish by accusing her of adultery. From which the great praise of the Virgin and the great piety, goodness, mildness, and discretion of this blessed Joseph should be obvious.¹²⁹

126 Pierre d'Ailly, *Les gloires de Saint Joseph*, trans. J. Darche (Paris, 1878), 28–36.

127 There are at least three extant Latin manuscripts: Avignon, BM, MS 342 (first half of the 15th century, Celestines of Avignon); Paris, BnF, MS lat. 14907 (15th century, abbey of Saint-Victor); Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18572 (early 15th century, Celestines of Paris). An edition, with French translation, has been published: Pierre Pocquet, 'Dictamen de laudibus beati Josephi', ed. M. Lieberman, in Lieberman, 'Pierre Pocquet', 24–71. Paul Payan has also discovered a French translation, with the author misstated as 'maistre Jehan Rammeson'. See Payan, *Joseph*, 160–2, 217.

128 Payan, *Joseph*, 160–2; Comte, 'Les Célestins du Midi', 193–4.

129 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18206, fol. 17r: 'Ideo cogitabat eam occulte dimittere, per hoc consulens uxori, ut si adultera esset verecundaretur et penitentiam ageret de peccato. Sibi etiam consulens ne si innocens ipsa esset, faceret innocentem perire, eam ut adulteram accusando. Ex quibus

Through this, Pocquet thought, Joseph had provided a most noble example for his readers, perhaps especially his scrupulous Celestine charges. 'Following this example, we ought to deliberate at length over doubtful and hard things, and do no nothing rashly, neither exercising justice without pity nor pity without justice.'¹³⁰ Pocquet's legal mindset perhaps makes itself known in this example. Joseph had far from ignored the demands of justice: being 'just' was one of his great virtues. But in doing so, Pocquet showed himself to be a jurist open to the exercise of equity beyond the strict letter of the law: through his pity, Joseph had looked towards a morally positive result for all sides.

In the more focused treatment of Joseph found in the *Dictamen*, these episodes are not neglected, with Pocquet drawing similar meaning from them.¹³¹ But that poem offers something else: it is a reflection on authority and community. For centuries, Joseph had most often been painted as a passive, background figure due to the potentially awkward implications of Joseph's marriage to Mary for the latter's virginity and Christ's divine parentage.¹³² For Pocquet, however, the juxtaposition of the expectations of fatherhood and leadership with Joseph's unobtrusive and humbled style found pointed relevance.

This exegesis builds gradually throughout the *Dictamen*. In part, Joseph is painted as a man anointed by God: Pocquet describes how God 'established him over his own family, more precious to him than any other'.¹³³ He also represented a conduit of the divine will that had tradition and succession behind it: his lineage is traced through David, and then the Joseph of the Old Testament.¹³⁴ If his authority was princely though, it was in a different realm: he was 'crowned' in the kingdom of heaven, where he was said to 'reign, with Jesus and Mary, on a throne of glory'. Thus, he sat near the top of a hierarchy in God's new dispensation.¹³⁵ In both his efficacy in heaven and his guardianship of the Holy Family on Earth, his authority parallels that of prelates more closely than that of his princely ancestors, while the sense of tradition and rising perfection is also reminiscent of the listing of monastic authorities found in the prologue of the *Vita* of Jean Bassand.

patet magna laus virginis et ipsius beati ioseph magna pietas, bonitas et mansuetudo atque discretio.' See also, Payan, *Joseph*, 60.

¹³⁰ Ibid.: 'Exemplo cuius debemus in re dubia et ardua diu deliberare, et subito nil agere, nec iusticiam sine pietate, nec pietatem sine iusticia exercere.'

¹³¹ Pocquet, 'Dictamen', 22, 46.

¹³² Payan, *Joseph*, 23–41.

¹³³ Pocquet, 'Dictamen', 26 (v.23).

¹³⁴ Ibid., 22, 36–40 (vv.6–8, 51–63).

¹³⁵ Ibid., 60 (vv.122, 127).

The link with monastic prelates is in the end made explicit in the *Dictamen's* treatment of Joseph and Mary finding Jesus in the temple. Here, however, one finds the conservative vision of obedience to anointed superiors in tension with a more questioning and conciliatory aspect, irenic in its aim. Jesus submitted himself to Joseph (and Mary), which was a noble example of the virtue of submission for monks in Pocquet's eyes: 'Thus, shame on you | human prostrate on the ground, to not obey your superiors | When you can see God, for your benefit, | So that you might have liberty, | submit to his inferiors'.¹³⁶ Seen one way, the passage is a simple call to obey one's anointed superiors, whom God himself had favoured; the image indeed evokes profession in citing prostration. But there is also a reverse model present, of Christ submitting to his inferior as a necessary part of an incarnation that freed mankind from its sinful shackles. Might there have been within this a reminder to superiors that even if their juniors had vowed to obey them, they also had to humble themselves at times before their charges? Such a model of mutual submission is also present in his edition of Climacus's *Ladder of Perfection*, as seen earlier. It is also prominent in the *Orationarium*, if not in connection with Joseph. Obedience, on the one hand, was due even to less worthy prelates, as Pocquet's prayer for religious made clear: 'you [Jesus] wanted obedience to be shown even to bad prelates'.¹³⁷ On the other hand, the best prelates were, as he said in relation to the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3: 15), ideally to subordinate themselves in some way to their juniors: this was the highest form of humility, a form that not only reached towards salvation, but a greater reformist perfection in life. He drew out a model of mutual submission derived from the biblical *Glossa ordinaria* for special consideration here. The third and highest grade of humility – which contained 'all justice' – was to place oneself beneath a junior, in the manner of Jesus during his baptism: 'Indeed, just as the highest pride is to prefer oneself to a prelate, so the highest humility is to subordinate oneself to a subordinate'.¹³⁸

Returning to Joseph, Pocquet's painting of him as a 'father' to Jesus, something that also seems to place him symbolically close to monastic

¹³⁶ Ibid., 48 (vv.89–91).

¹³⁷ Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18206, fol. 54v: 'Insuper obedienciam eciam malis prelati impendendam voluisti.'

¹³⁸ Ibid., fols 39v–40r: 'Et perfecta humilitas habet tres gradus, primus est subdere se maiori et se non preferre equali, et ista vocatur sufficiens quia sufficit ad salutem. Alius gradus est subdere se equali et non preferre se minori, et hec dicitur habundans. Tercius gradus est subdere se inferiori, in quo est omnis iusticia, quia ista est summa humilitas quam iesus christus implevit baptizando se a iohanne. Sicut enim summa superbia est preferre se prelati, sic summa humilitas est subdere se subdito.'

superiors, likewise reflects the ambivalence of this model. Pocquet is careful in chapter eight of the *Orationarium*, detailing Joseph's doubts over Mary's virginity, to state that Joseph was a '*pater putativus*', the 'presumed father' in the eyes of society.¹³⁹ Pocquet's use of this language was in line with many discussions of Joseph prior to the late Middle Ages, especially among Franciscan writers, and had the advantage of emphasizing Mary's virginity and thus Christ's divine parentage.¹⁴⁰ With this much made abundantly clear, however, in both the *Orationarium* and especially the *Dictamen*, where the adjective *putativus* is never used, he made clear that Joseph deserved to be called simply the 'father' of Jesus, in a manner that Gerson would echo.¹⁴¹ Positioned thus, the bonds of obedience of Mary and Jesus to him might seem tighter: it was as a 'father' that he led and governed them. In classifying him as such, however, Pocquet avoided the more technical theological or legal arguments about what made a true father. Rather he related this familial role very closely with the provision of tender care: this was somewhat unusual, at least with regard to prescribed images of secular fatherhood.¹⁴² In the *Orationarium*, Joseph was 'truly a father by virtue of care': he became worthy of the role through the love that he showed to the Holy Family.¹⁴³ In the first use of the word *pater* in the *Dictamen*, his governance of Christ carried the same explanation: he was 'the father of the Lord, tutor of God, by the care that he provided'.¹⁴⁴ Pocquet expanded on this definition later,

139 Ibid., fol. 22r 'Ex hiis patet non solum modo magna dignitas virginis, sed etiam ipsius ioseph qui meruit salvatorem nomine proprio nominare tanquam pater eius putativus'; ibid.: 'et ipsum nomine proprio ut pater putativus nominare meruisti.'

140 On this terminology and its decline in the late Middle Ages, see Payan, *Joseph*, 336.

141 Even in chapter 8 of the *Orationarium*, Pocquet reaches towards a plainer definition. See Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18206, fol. 18r: 'Ex quibus patet maxima dignitas ipsius sancti Ioseph, quod matrem dei omnipotentis in uxorem habere meruit, ipsam semper virginem et se ipsum custodiens, pater eius vocari meruit, ipsi filio dei tam familiariter deservivit ipsum in egyptum ducendo.' See also Pocquet, 'Dictamen', 44, 46, 48, 54, 64, 66. Payan, *Joseph*, 336, notes that Gerson never employed '*pater putativus*' in any of his discussions of Joseph.

142 Such a close association of secular fatherhood with tender care was not the norm in the Middle Ages. See R.M. Karras, *From Boys to Men: formations of masculinity in late medieval Europe* (University Park, 2003), 165–6. It did, however, emerge in Peter Damian's understanding of spiritual fatherhood; see M. McLaughlin, 'Secular and Spiritual Fatherhood in the Eleventh Century', in *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: men in the medieval West*, ed. J. Murray (New York, 1999), 25–43.

143 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18206, fol. 29v: 'Postmodum meditare quomodo predictis expletis beata virgo mater christi et beatus ioseph pater suus putativus, et cura vere pater, cum parvulo iesu cum gaudio reversi sunt in galileam in nazareth civitatem suam, in qua christus conceptus et pro magna parte nutritus est.'

144 Pocquet, 'Dictamen', 38 (v.60).

following the story of finding Jesus in the temple: 'Not by flesh, since from an uncorrupted virgin | by a mystical breath | He was born, | but he [Joseph] was his father by the care | that he showed honourably and by nature | to Him who is the only begotten of God'.¹⁴⁵ Shortly after the first mention of fatherhood (v.60), one finds the image of Jesus being 'nourished' and 'held' by Joseph (v.62).¹⁴⁶ A few stanzas further on, this same fatherhood of 'care' appears linked with Joseph of Arimethea's care for the body of Jesus after death. The latter prepared and embalmed Jesus's body 'with perfumes and clean linens', whereas Joseph, the father, showed him tenderness during life: 'The living, holy body of Jesus | he cherished and laid | tenderly in His bed'.¹⁴⁷ That tenderness in life should be linked to post-mortem care of a body seems noteworthy, as if such actions might be an acknowledgement of man's ultimate terrestrial frailty, one which humbled even Christ, the king of all. One can also see the vulnerability of fatherhood reflected in Mary's pleading with Jesus to return to their care when they find Jesus in the temple: she told him to 'see the affliction of your father, and I your crying mother': the father is as emotionally affected as the mother.¹⁴⁸ Coming just a few stanzas before his call for juniors to submit to their superiors, the ultimate vulnerability of the 'superior' to charges who could desert them was on full display.

Through Joseph, the 'father' re-emerged in a congregation that had previously eroded the freedom of the fatherly office, that of the abbot, in a manner which was unprecedented in Benedictine circles: in the French province, on a constitutional level, there were indeed no abbots at all. While Pocquet evidently wanted to both expand his congregation and to reform it through his leadership, there is a sense within this text of him justifying the sort of role he and his allies had taken. This may have resulted from real communal concerns: the Celestine brothers at Metz evidently did not hesitate to complain of superiors who were perceived to have failed in ascetic terms (Jacques Guernet d'Amance and Mathieu Odenat de Metz) or who opened themselves to the charge of hypocrisy in their high-handed enforcement (Marc de Nérac). The somewhat ambivalent position of Pocquet in the *Quodlibeta* also makes sense from this perspective. While evidently in control, he could also be seen as acting out this expectation of mutual submission, at least to an extent: he left himself open to questioning and

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 54 (v.93).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 40 (vv. 65–6).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 48 (v.85).

placed himself beneath Gerson, who offered palliative counsel to the concerns of his charges. These displays may have been more than pragmatic acts. When Pocquet thought of the proud and ambitious men whom he pilloried in the *Orationarium* for causing the Schism, how did he separate himself from them? Joseph perhaps provided an aspirational goal, a man who truly worked for his flock, whether it be as a firm hand to save them from the dangers that surrounded them or through love and compassion to hold them together: as he said of Joseph, ‘He who was graced by his labours | was honoured as a father | in this vale of misery’.¹⁴⁹

* * *

Pocquet’s thought was deftly woven and remarkably original in many of its balances. Taking his monastic reform work as a whole, Pocquet’s ideological legacy is one that parallels, at times, the tough moral arithmetic that would become the hallmark of the Franciscan Observant and former canon lawyer, Bernardino of Siena (1380–1444), and at others, the casuist discretion in the name of charity and unity often seen as more characteristic of Pocquet’s friend, Jean Gerson.¹⁵⁰ Pocquet, however, began his work before either of those titans hit the stage, and attempted to draw both of these ways of thinking together. His vision was defining for the Celestines in this age. For Simon Bonhomme, imitation of Christ’s entire message was likewise key, which meant not only ‘being lovers of sacred poverty’, but making the cloister a ‘terrestrial paradise’, keeping in mind the charitable ends of communal peace and harmony: ‘No one should bring scandal within it: rather peacefully and quietly you should always behold heavenly charity, not seeking what is pleasing and useful only to you, but rather the same for the greater community’.¹⁵¹ The model of leadership present in the *Vita* of Jean Bassand seems to parallel Pocquet’s Joseph, anointed yet submissive, enforcing yet caring.

But if such a vision was cohesive on the level of theory, it was ambivalent on the level of practice. Tensions between excluding the world and forging ties to it, between literalism and flexible moral consolation, between hierarchical stridency and irenicism were pulled taut within French Celestine observance. With all things considered, there seems to be no immediate

149 Ibid., 64 (v. 125).

150 Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity*, 65–71; F. Mormando, “‘To Persuade Is a Victory’: rhetoric and moral reasoning in the sermons of Bernardino of Siena”, in *The Context of Casuistry*, ed. J.F. Keenan and T.A. Shannon (Washington, DC, 1995), 55–84, also cited in Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity*, 69–70.

151 Bonhomme, ‘Meditationes’, 141.

winner in these contests. The *Quodlibeta* suggests one image of how matters might have been resolved, with openness, flexibility and mutual submission carrying the day. Even there, however, in the questions the monks asked, it is obvious enough that retrenchment, rigidity and enforcement had won out on plenty of others. The image of the Holy Family perhaps ultimately provided spiritual consolation more than workable practical advice to many of its French Celestine readers. Like those simple, ascetic people, they too were pulled towards great challenges for the reform and salvation of the world; they too were to strive with all they had to be just; and they too were to strive with all they had to show compassion. But as men, they acknowledged that they would fail: they would be unjust, they would fail in charity. And yet in their imperfect striving, they could still hope to rely upon the mercy, upon the grace that their models had played a part in giving to the world.

In the end, perhaps, a more pragmatic attitude would come together, at least on the internal level, and possibly through exhaustion: the latter stages of the fifteenth century would see a gradual loosening of ascetic demands on the rank and file as discussed briefly in the previous chapter, and in return leaders like Guillaume Romain seem to have operated with still greater freedom. But it was not so much them, but rather the French Celestines of the turn of the fifteenth century, the Celestines who strived to achieve personal and communal purity and perfection through all paths that attracted the greatest interest from the outside world. It has already been seen how the French Celestine reformers, even in their careful internal tinkering, were galvanized by reflections drawn from their wider social milieu: its concerns (particularly the greed and disunity within the Church), its ideas and debates (visions of legal order, but also the moral casuistry of Gerson) and its aspirations (purity, peace and unity in Christian society). But also clear is that they were a creative force in this space. If they drew from both monastic heritage and contemporary thought, their solutions were solidified by their own experiences in a manner that brought forward characteristic moral compounds and even new devotional emphases. To judge by the *Vita* of Jean Bassand, which draws together so much of the legacy of that age, they had led themselves to believe that they could provide solutions for their world that perhaps others could not. What will be seen from here on is that the self-aggrandizement present within that text was not baseless. Their purity, their prayers and even their vision of order, community and hierarchy all found receptive audiences. If their internal life was one of jagged edges, they found relevance despite them and perhaps even through them: in a world full of jagged edges, they were well placed to provide answers.

Part II

The world of the French Celestines

4. Foundations, benefactions and material maintenance

Whatever else may be said about the state of late medieval coenobitic monasticism in the West, it would be impossible to claim that the period under study was particularly generous to monasteries on a material level. The tales of financial diminution, of the collapse or secularization of houses struggling for funds, seem certainly to far outweigh those of expansion and new foundations.¹ Such was not the case with the Celestines. Theirs is unquestionably a story of growth: between 1300 and 1450 seventeen monasteries were built for them, thirteen of them in the period directly under study. Their expansion can appear somewhat exceptional, however; in their region, only the Carthusians and the Colettine Claresses seem to have achieved comparable feats.² Overall, moreover, there is a striking contrast with the monastic expansions of the early and high Middle Ages that saw hundreds upon hundreds of Benedictine and Cistercian houses built, and after them, a similar wave of mendicant growth. The financial instability of existing houses has often been understood from perspectives that take into account wider macro- and microeconomic trends. The Black Death and its recurrences took a particularly heavy toll on monasteries, both in terms of their own numbers and on their finances, the ongoing effects of depopulation hurting landed incomes.³ In France, meanwhile, the Hundred Years War caused damage to monastic property and population displacements that likewise destabilized communities.⁴ Nevertheless, the fact that late medieval reformers could not find a way to expand in new houses in the manner of previous generations might seem to suggest the

1 F. Rapp, *L'Église et la vie religieuse en Occident à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1971), 216–18; F. Rapp, 'Le poids de temporel', in *Histoire du Christianisme*, vol. vi: *Un temps d'épreuves*, ed. J.-M. Mayeur, C. Pietri, A. Vauchez and M. Venard (Paris, 1990), 465–79, at 469–71.

2 J.I. Catto, 'Statesman and Contemplatives in the Early Fifteenth Century', in *Studies in Carthusian Monasticism in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. J.M. Luxford (Turnhout, 2008), 107–14, at 108; Lopez, *Culture et sainteté*, 448–9. The Carthusians added 105 new houses across Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries; the Colettines founded 38 new houses between 1412 and 1520.

3 H. Denifle, *La désolation des églises, monastères and hôpitaux en France pendant la Guerre de Cent Ans*, 2 vols (Macon, 1897), i, 56–63. See also, F. Rapp, 'Les abbeyes, hospices de la noblesse: l'influence de l'aristocratie sur les couvents bénédictins dans l'Empire à la fin du Moyen Âge', in *La noblesse au Moyen Âge*, ed. P. Contamine (Paris, 1976), 315–38, at 336.

4 In France, the costs of war have long been considered defining: see Denifle, *La désolation des églises, monastères and hôpitaux*.

declining prestige and social relevance that has sometimes been alleged of vowed religious life, and of coenobitic monasticism in particular, in the late Middle Ages.

And yet, Observant monastic reform was an explosion of the sort that surely required significant outside interest. In the case of the French Celestines, their founders and major benefactors represent a 'Who's Who' of late medieval France: the Valois monarchy, Louis, duke of Orléans, the Avignon papacy and so on. Moreover, these monks were drawn very close to the society that bestowed these gifts on a spatial level. As this chapter will make clear, their supporters were not only found within the highest echelons, but drawn from a spectrum that ran down to the mid-tier of society; it was not without breadth. There were grave limitations on their expansion associated with their late medieval French environment – broader economic factors, the pitfalls of the late medieval 'spiritual economy', and internal moral concerns – but a lack of interest or cultural relevance was not one of them.

Giving to the Celestines

Founders and foundations

Of the seventeen lasting houses founded between 1300 and 1450, seven were founded by kings and princes.⁵ Another was founded by a schismatic pope (Avignon, by the Avignonese pope Clement VII in 1393, although the foundation was also claimed by Charles VI), and three by cardinals and bishops (Ternes, by Roger le Fort, bishop of Limoges, in 1338; Gentilly by the Cardinals Annibaldo Ceccano and Francesco de Aptis in 1356; and Columbier by Cardinal Pierre Bertrand in 1361).

At the lower end of the social scale, relatively speaking, Metz (1370) was the work of an eminent provincial bourgeois, Bertrand le Hongre, while Offémont (1331) was founded by Jean de Nesles, lord of Offémont, a provincial noble. As one might expect given the prevalence of princely foundations, those in royal service also feature within this cast. Villeneuve-lez-Soissons

5 Ambert in 1300 and Mont-de-Châtres in 1309 by Philip the Fair; Limay-lez-Mantes by Charles V in 1377; Amiens by Charles VI at the instigation of his *maître des comptes* Hugues d'Ailly in 1392 and with the co-operation of the mayor and aldermen of Amiens; Lyon by Amadeo VIII, duke of Savoy, in 1407–21; Vichy by Louis II, duke of Bourbon, in 1403–10; and Rouen, begun by John, duke of Bedford, in 1430, 'founded' in 1445 by Henry VI, and firmly established by Charles VII in 1449.

(1390) was founded by the famed soldier Enguerrand de Coucy (d.1396), who had made his mark at both the Valois and Plantagenet courts. At the former, he rose to the rank of Maréchal de France, while during a spell spent as a hostage in England (1360–5), he was married to Isabella, the eldest daughter of Edward III, who would later grant him the title of Earl of Bedford (1367).⁶ If Enguerrand came from a relatively distinguished noble line, foundations associated with those that one might call ‘up and comers’ within royal service particularly mark the period directly under study (c.1350–1450). Marcoussis (foundation charter 1406, built 1404–8) was founded by Jean de Montaigu, a royal secretary who rose to the rank of *grand maître de France* under Charles VI; while Sens (1366) was founded by Isabelle Bilouard, building on the bequest of her husband Jean de Mézières, *maître de comptes*. Paris (1352) resulted from the donation a rich bourgeois, Garnier Marcel, cousin of the famed Étienne Marcel, at the solicitation of the royal secretary, Robert Jussy. If these patrons were socially linked to the Celestines’ major royal supporters of this period, Charles V and VI specifically, their prominence within the cast of founders perhaps also says something about the economic fortunes of the age: it was those in the service of royal government, rather than the old landed nobility and gentry, who were on the rise.

Why did these people desire to found Celestine monasteries? The motives are undoubtedly varied. Even their foundation charters – which due to their use of relatively formulaic motifs doubtless hide further complexity – display a range of characters in the combination of motives and stipulations cited. Benefits to one’s own soul and those of one’s family and friends – the primary motivation of the vast majority of medieval religious benefactors – unsurprisingly feature prominently in these charters; only the documents concerning the foundation of Avignon make no mention whatsoever of direct spiritual benefit to the founder (Clement VII). Nevertheless, the exact manner in which these benefits were meant to be procured is more variable.

On the one hand, these documents bear witness to the development of what might be called the ‘spiritual economy’ of the late Middle Ages. In a period where donors had become concerned over time spent in purgatory (an idea of late twelfth-century origin),⁷ they also became increasingly concerned to set in stone a continuity of measurable spiritual benefit. From the thirteenth century onward, a transition is clear towards gifts that were given directly for the celebration of Masses, often in very large numbers. More traditional forms of benefaction that imposed fewer binding burdens

6 On the life of Enguerrand, see Tuchman, *Distant Mirror*.

7 J. le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago 1986).

on the recipient, such as gifts in free alms and the often concomitant requests for participation in the spiritual works of a monastery, became less common.⁸ It was this trend towards fixed services that gave birth to the chantry (*chapellenie* in French), which offered the spiritual succour of perpetual Masses – daily, weekly, monthly, etc. – in return for incomes to support a priest to say them. The rise of secular chaplains as recipients of religious benefaction that resulted has been well noted: where numbers of Masses became the currency of salvation, the status of the intercessor – secular or monastic – appears to have mattered less to many benefactors than who could provide the greatest volume of liturgical commemoration.⁹ This trend broadened the field of competitors, and monasteries might have had little choice but to submit themselves to similar commitments in order to gain funding. The houses of Paris and Sens both began life as secular chantries. When the founding families handed control to the Celestines, they were expected to uphold the existing Masses that were already established: two daily Masses for Jacques Marcel, father of Garnier Marcel, at Paris,¹⁰ and fifteen Masses per week for Jean de Mézières and his wife at Sens.¹¹

Despite this wider trend, however, it is clear from the foundation charters of Celestine houses that they were able to fill privileged niches that other forms of foundation could not. Most of these documents in fact read far more traditionally: they call for service but with less precisions and contractual expectation and are full of respect for the wider spiritual benefits provided by supporting monasteries. At Ternes and Vichy, the respective charters bound the monks to take on certain observances that were not yet defined in the charters.¹² At three more – Amiens (one solemn Mass of the Holy Spirit

8 J. Chiffolleau, 'Sur l'usage obsessionnel de la messe pour les morts à la fin du Moyen Âge', in *Faire croire*, ed. A. Vauchez (Rome, 1981), 236–56; Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà*, 345–71. For an English parallel, see B. Thompson, 'From Alms to Spiritual Services: the function and status of monastic property in medieval England', in *Monastic Studies*, ii, ed. J. Loades (Bangor, 1991), 227–61.

9 For the Francophone West, see again Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà*; N. Bériou, 'Les chapellenies dans la province ecclésiastique de Reims au XIV^e siècle', *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France*, 57 (1971), 227–40; For English parallels, see K.L. Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain* (Cambridge, 1965).

10 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 85–9 (Paris, donation contract of Garnier Marcel, handing over not only the site but the maintenance of his father's *chapellenies* after the death of their chaplains, 10 November 1352).

11 Ibid., 140–7 (Sens, confirmation by Guillaume, archbishop of Sens, of donation made by Isabelle Bilouard of Jean de Mézières's chapel and four *chapellenies* to the Celestines, 1 June 1366).

12 Ibid., 73–4 (Ternes, foundation charter of Roger le Fort, 1338): 'Ibidem numerum fratrum et servitorum dicto loco deputandorum, ac modum formam etiam et numerum missarum et aliorum

per year for Charles VI while alive and an anniversary Mass after his death), Marcoussis (four Masses per year for Jean de Montaigu, his family and the Valois royal family) and Lyon (two Masses per year for Amadeo VIII, duke of Savoy, and his progeny) – the duties defined were extremely light.¹³ At the others, no such duties for fixed Masses said especially for the founder and their nearest and dearest were defined at foundation.

Just as common, in fact, is the quite traditional motive of being 'participants' and 'accompanied' more broadly by the spiritual works of the monks. This occurs in five charters (Offémont, Mantes, Sens, Villeneuve-lez-Soissons and Marcoussis), including three of those (Mantes, Villeneuve-lez-Soissons, Offémont) at which no other explicit liturgical duty for their founders is mentioned.¹⁴ The motif also recurs in the second donation to Mont-de-Châtres by Philip the Fair (1312).¹⁵ At Metz, where the foundation was for only four monks initially, the founder, Bertrand le Hongre asked for a specific liturgy in honour of the Virgin Mary (to whom monastery was dedicated) in place of regular duties; given his interest in setting the monks' liturgy, it seems clear that he likewise believed he would participate in its benefits,

divinorum officiorum celebrandorum ibidem, ac ordinationes quasdam et statuta quas et quae circa statum dicti loci et etiam praemissorum super aliquibus speramus et intendimus facere cum dicti reditus fuerint, annuente Domino, in melius augmentati, declarationi et ordinationi nostris specialiter reservamus et etiam retinemus nobis expresse'; *ibid.*, 281 (Vichy, foundation charter of Louis II, duke of Bourbon, April 1410): 'les grandes messes du jour avec toutes les heures canoniaux du jour, matins, prime, tierce, midi, none, vespres, complies, et autres prieres que les Religieux du dit ordre ont accoustume de dire et celebrer, et aussi messes de morts et vigilles et autres messes que nous ou nos executeurs apres nous leurs ordonnerons et instituerons de faire.'

¹³ Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/154, no. 234 (Amiens, donation of 1000 francs by Charles VI, with the stipulation of an annual Mass, made at the same time as foundation, November 1392); Paris, BA, MS 5145, 269 (Marcoussis, foundation charter of Jean de Montaigu, 21 May 1406); *ibid.*, 281 (Lyon, foundation charter of Amadeo VIII, duke of Savoy, February 1407).

¹⁴ Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/115, no. 367 (Mantes, foundation charter of Charles V, February 1377): 'ut fratres inibi sub observantia regulari prefate summe trinitati perpetuum exhibeant famulatum, assiduis et supplicibus intercessionibus apud Deum insistant, ut hic sua nos pietate dirigat per suorum semitas mandatorum et post diem extremum salvationis locum jubeat nobis misericorditer indulgeri'; Paris, BA, MS 5145, 250 (Offémont, foundation charter, 1331): 'pour estre participans et accompagnes aux bienfaits et oraison desdits Religieux'; *ibid.*, 141 (Sens): 'se ipsam et prefatum Joannem sanctorum bonorum spritualium participes esse cupiens'; *ibid.*, 231 (Villeneuve-lez-Soissons, confirmation by Louis, duke of Orléans, November 1404, of Enguerrand de Coucy's foundation charter of 25 April 1390): 'pour estre accompagne a tous les bienfaits de Charite, de prieres et devotions qui ont ete, sont et seront faits par les dittes Religieux dudit ordre'; *ibid.*, 265 (Marcoussis): 'toujours plus acceuilis et accompagnez et participants en toute les messes et prieres, oraisons et biens spirituels qui ont été et seront faites par les Religieux du dit ordre'.

¹⁵ Paris, BA, MS 5145, 61 (Mont-de-Châtres, donation by Philip IV of 80 livres paris in revenue, 1312): 'suffragiorum suorum nos participes efficiant'.

despite not declaring these Masses to be for his direct spiritual gain.¹⁶ If elsewhere the benefit of participation declined in relative importance, there are hints that the particular assiduousness of Celestine liturgical observance strengthened its perceived impact. At Sens, in the charter provided on Isabelle Bilouard's behalf by Guillaume, archbishop of Sens, the quality of the office said by the Celestines is singled out directly before the desire to become 'participants'.¹⁷ At Offémont, Jean de Nesles noted how the Celestine brothers of the nearby monastery of Mont-de-Châtres were known for their 'divine service', which they made 'devotedly and with affection both day and night, continually going from strength to strength', just after his request to be a 'participant' in their spiritual benefits.¹⁸

If their devotion in Mass, the office, and their other monastic prayers continued to be of interest to benefactors, it should be noted that the category of 'spiritual goods' identified by Celestine founders ran beyond this. At Villeneuve-lez-Soissons, Enguerrand de Coucy wanted to be accompanied by the monks 'charity' as well as their prayers.¹⁹ At Mantes, the fact that the monks were 'under regular observance' was cited by Charles V in his request to participate in the spiritual benefits of the monastery; as seen earlier, this may have resulted from the influence of Pierre Pocquet, the first prior of the house, but the fact that the writers of the charter found it worthy of mention is not without significance when other parallels are introduced.²⁰ The 'good life and *conversatio*' of the monks was cited in the same context at Offémont, while at Sens, the charter noted the 'austerities, fasts and penances that they complete and uphold continually' directly alongside their Divine Office. The perceived ascetic purity of their life from one aspect seemed to reinforce the quality of their liturgical intercessions, but at Sens it was presented as a direct source of the benefit expected. At the two early foundations of Philip the Fair, Ambert and Mont-de-Châtres, their ascetic rigour was also emphasized as an object of interest for Philip IV.²¹ The

16 Ibid., 218 (Metz, foundation charter, 11 January 1370): 'qui en la ditte chapelle seront tenus de dire chacun jour a matin apres soleil lavant a toujoursmais une messe a note de nostre dame et faire leur office selon la Regle dudit ordre sans nul desfalt'.

17 Ibid., 141 (Sens): 'considerans austeritates, jejunia, poenitentias, quas peragunt jugiter et sustinent, necnon divinum officium quod devotissime faciunt dicti fratres, se ipsam et prefatum Joannem sanctorum bonorum spritualium participes esse cupiens'.

18 Ibid., 250 (Offémont): 'de bonne vie, de honest conversation, devotement et affectueusement faire le service de Dieu de jour et de nuit et continuellement perseverans de mieulx en mieulx'.

19 See note 14 of this chapter.

20 See *ibid.*

21 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 33 (Ambert, foundation charter, 28 October 1303): 'attendentes itaque summae ac sanctae religionis exactam observantiam, vitae purioris Innocentiam; et aliarum

attempted foundation of a Celestine chapel in Barcelona likewise provides fascinating detail on this issue, due to the survival of a list of questions asked by its prospective founder, King Martin of Aragon (whose death in 1410 prevented its completion) and Jean Bassand's responses to them.²² Martin had asked them about almost every aspect of their life and routine: for instance, what rule and other legislation they followed (the Rule of Benedict and the Celestine constitutions), how they elected their prelates (through a provincial chapter), whether they said all the hours in the church (they did), whether they used an organ at Mass (they did not, nor any other instrument), what office they said (the canonical office, as well as the Office of the Virgin and the Office of the Dead), and whether they ate meat (they did not, unless gravely infirm).²³ Overall, Martin seems to have been no less concerned with their overall way of life than their liturgical efforts.

In line with the long tradition of monastic benefaction, the consecrated ground possessed by the Celestines could also be an attractive force: two of the founders (Cardinal Pierre Bertrand at Colombier and Amadeo VIII, duke of Savoy at Lyon) specifically requested burial in their foundation charters: both wanted to be close to the great altar.²⁴ Doubtless the intention was there in other cases too. At Sens, Isabelle Bilouard was buried in the Celestine habit,²⁵ while at Paris, Garnier Marcel and his wife were buried in the nave of the church.²⁶ At Metz, Bertrand le Hongre died in the monastery and was buried there.²⁷ The heart of Enguerrand de Coucy was buried at his foundation at Villeneuve-lez-Soissons following his death on crusade in Bursa.²⁸ Jean de Montaigu, following his grizzly death at the hands of the Burgundian faction and the public display of his body at Les Halles (1409),

praeclara virtutum merita; *ibid.*, 58–9 (Mont-de-Châtres, foundation charter, 1309): 'Religiosorum virorum fratrum ordinis Murronensis, qui inter caeteros Religionis cultores specialiter et singulariter mundanis oblectationibus conculcatis, sua castigantes corpora et in servitatem asperam reducentes, carnem spiritui servire compellentes cessionisque vitae regulam amplexantes'.

²² See Chapter 5, 230, on this attempted foundation.

²³ Transcribed in Avignon, BM, MS 1363, fols 81r–83v; while this is a 17th-century transcription, an earlier copy apparently was recorded at Avignon, Archives départementales de Vaucluse, 19H 61.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 128 (Colombier, testament of Cardinal Pierre Bertrand, d.1361): 'Item ubicumque me decedere contigerit corpus meum volo et eligo sepeliri infra capellam seu Ecclesiam dicti monasterii subtus majus altare'; *ibid.*, 294 (Lyon): 'reservato pro nobis expresse in dicta ecclesia prope maius altare a parte dextra vel alibi in loco decenti et honestiori loco apto et congruo ad tumulandum'.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 162.

²⁶ 'Célestins de Paris, obituaires', in *Obituaires de la Province de Sens*, ed. A. Molinier, vol. i of *Recueil des historiens de la France, obituaires*, 4 vols (Paris, 1902), 706–29, at 718.

²⁷ Paris, BA, MS 5145, 228.

²⁸ Tuchman, *Distant Mirror*, 468–9.

was buried before the grand altar at Marcoussis.²⁹ Before his death, the Avignonese pope Clement VII had also declared a wish to be buried at the Celestine house he founded at Avignon, according to the fifteenth-century obituary of the house. While he was initially buried at the church of Notre-Dame des Doms, his corpse was moved in 1401 once a sufficient portion of the building work at the Celestine church was completed and placed in a magnificent tomb before the high altar at the instigation of the papal chamberlain, François, archbishop de Narbonne.³⁰

The act of giving itself receives mention as a benefit to one's soul in nine of the surviving charters.³¹ These gifts could represent quite simply a gift to God, or 'alms' (giving to the poor, in this case the religious poor).³² That much was very traditional, and on their own such statements could be seen as a simple continuation or echo of an earlier culture of religious benefaction. However, these phrases sometimes sit alongside more detailed descriptions of the benefits of this charitable action that seem more aligned to the tastes of the period. Eight of them looked forward to an 'increase of divine service' or the 'divine cult', a gift to Christian society which might seem more valuable than ever in the age of 'counting piety'.³³ At Offémont, Jean de Nesles wished

29 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 273.

30 Avignon, BM, MS 1753, 6v; C.A. Fleck, 'Seeking Legitimacy: art and manuscripts for the popes in Avignon from 1378 to 1417', in *Companion to the Great Western Schism*, ed. Rollo-Koster and Izbicki, 239–302, at 260–4; L.H. Labande, 'Le tombeau de Clément VII', *Revue savoisienne*, 38 (1897), 93–8.

31 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 33 (Ambert): 'ac ipsos et eorum loca juxta sui status exigentiam volenter congrue Regia liberalitate dotare, eisdem fratribus ac eorum successoribus ab nostrae progenitorum nostrorum, recolendaeque memoria Joannae Dei gratia franciae et Navarrae Reginae quondam nostrae consortis carissimae animarum remedium et salutem'; *ibid.*, 58 (Mont-de-Châtres): 'cupientes itaque in terris seminare dum vivimus unde vitae fructum perpetuae recolligere valeamus in caelis [...] providimus et fundandum'; *ibid.*, 73 (Ternes): 'in puram eleemosynam pro me et parentum nostrorum animarum salute conferimus ac pura perfecta et irrevocabili donatione facta solemniter inter vivas donamus'; *ibid.*, 86 (Paris): 'avoient et ont donne pour Dieu et en vraye aumone'; *ibid.*, 125 (Colombier) 'eleemosinis quae pro eorum Spiritibus erogantur'; *ibid.*, 218 (Metz): 'pour Dieu et en almone'; *ibid.*, 231 (Villeneuve-lez-Soissons): 'edifier et faire tresor envers Dieu qui tout bien a preté'; *ibid.*, 251 (Offémont): 'pour le perpetuel salut de nos ames [...] donne'; *ibid.*, 291 (Lyon): 'pro nostra et praeclarissimae consortis nostrae et praedecessorum nostrorum comitum Sabaudiae et aliorum consanguinitatis nostrae animarum salute damus et concedimus'.

32 Mentioned at Ternes, Paris, Colombier and Metz (see preceding footnote). Charles VII also mentioned this in his 'refounding' of the Rouen house: Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/186, no. 88: 'in donum et puram Eleemosinam dedimus'; Paris, BA, MS 5145, 329.

33 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 71 (Ternes): 'augmentum Divini cultus (quem nostris praesertim temporibus desideramus augeri) conspiciunt'; *ibid.*, 113 (Gentilly): 'pro divini cultus augmento'; *ibid.*, 86 (Paris): 'pour le divin service augmenter et accroistre'; *ibid.*, 231 (Villeneuve-lez-Soissons):

for the 'augmentation and increase of their [Celestine] religion'; here the spread of a novel Benedictine congregation and their example of 'good life and honest *conversatio*' seem as important as the quality of their prayers.³⁴

At the royal foundations, the logic of the charters is dominated by notions of a royal religious duty for the ruled, which seems to have become more intense over time. Philip the Fair at Ambert said that it was the duty of 'great men, endowed with eminent power' to support 'consecrated Churches and the people of the Church, especially the religious'.³⁵ In the period directly under study, Charles V expanded on this significantly. The Limay-lez-Mantes foundation charter details how God bestows favour and disfavour upon nations and dynasties according to their moral character, and the *translatio imperii* from the Romans to the Greeks (the eastern Roman Empire) and then to the 'Franks in the person of Charles [Charlemagne]' that resulted. Under the wise guidance of its kings, the charter states, France had been preserved from heresy and schism; the 'churches, monasteries, convents, colleges and other [religious institutions]' these kings had built had assisted in procuring 'immense benefits of divine generosity', not only for the monarchy but for their 'realm'. With these things considered, Charles V sought the 'suffrage of life and health' through which he ruled by building such an institution.³⁶ As a 'new plantation in the garden of the Holy mother Church' and 'by the zeal of their religion, life and *conversatio*', the Celestines of Mantes would 'pour the perfume of sanctity upon all'.³⁷

At Amiens, the mayor and aldermen of the town, who donated a site for a Celestine monastery in accord with the wishes of Charles VI, cited their desire to create what was effectively a powerhouse of prayer for the world around them. They desired that their town should be 'adorned with good

'l'accroissement et augmentation du service divin'; *ibid.*, 265 (Marcoussis): 'en accroissement et augmentation de service divine'; *ibid.*, 280 (Vichy): 'a l'augmentation de son saint service'; *ibid.*, 290 (Lyon): 'ad ea quae laudem, gloriam et honorem creatoris nostri redemptoris denique salvatoris ac cultus eiusdem augmentum prospiciunt tenemur'. The same motif occurs at Avignon in the charter of Clement VII, see below.

34 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 251: 'a l'augmentation et accroissement de la fondation desdits religieux et de leur ditte Religion'; see above for Jean's description of the character of the Celestines.

35 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 32–3: 'Pietatis opus agi conspicitur si per viros magnificos et in potestatis eminentia constitutos Dei sacrosanctis Ecclesiis et personis Ecclesiasticis et maxime Religiosis iugiter Deo famulantibus copiosae largitatis dextera porrigatur'.

36 Becquet, *Gallicae Coelestinorum*, 24–7, at 26. See Chapter 5 for further discussion of the context of such imagery.

37 Becquet, *Gallicae Coelestinorum*, 26: 'qui ut novella plantatio in hortum sancte matris ecclesiae noviter radicata zelo religionis, vite et conversationis munita universis sanctimonie circumfundant'.

and religious people', who would pray not only for themselves and the king but for 'the good estate of the realm' and the 'welfare and tranquillity of the said town'.³⁸ At Avignon, the documents relating to the papal foundation cited Clement's desire 'to augment the divine cult and pious works', in relation to the burgeoning local cult of Pierre de Luxembourg (d.1387), whose tomb provided the location for the house.³⁹ The latter had been a cardinal of the Avignonese obedience – appointed by Clement at the age of just 15 in 1384 in order to co-opt the influence of his princely family – who came to be celebrated for his ascetic life.⁴⁰

The avowed purposes of what might be called 'second foundations' – where a benefactor declared himself to be a 'founder' by greatly expanding a monastery or completing one that had struggled to get off the ground – leant heavily in the direction of duty to Christian society and away from personal service. At Paris, Charles V effectively claimed the status of founder in stages. Firstly, while still dauphin, he approved the grant by the College of Notaries and Secretaries of the King of a monthly *bourse* (the same as each secretary and notary received) in August 1358, so that the house could 'celebrate Divine Office' and pray for 'the good estate of the realm and the chancery'.⁴¹ Then, from 1365 onwards, he rebuilt and rededicated the house in grand fashion: the church, the cloister and dormitory, the refectory and the chapter were all largely reconstructed under his auspices.⁴² The document confirming the resources for the building of the church, delivered on 24 March 1367, the day before the feast of the Annunciation to which the house would now be dedicated, described a duty to honour the 'blessed passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered so we might all today receive eternal life, and the glorious annunciation of the Virgin Mary, of which the feast will be celebrated tomorrow', as well as a desire to augment the 'service given in the Church of God'.⁴³ Only in his testament did Charles V found a daily Mass at the house through a separate gift.⁴⁴ Charles VI's sizeable gift of 4000 francs

38 Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/143, no. 283 (confirmation of Charles VI, dated 22 November 1392): 'desirons l'augmentation du service divin et la ditte ville estre decoree de bonnes et religieuses personnes qui devotement et assidement suient tenus de prier pour le Roy, notre dit Seigneur, la Reyne, leur noble ligne, et la bonne estat du Royaume, pour le bien and tranquillite de la ditte ville'.

39 Avignon, BM, MS 1753, fol. 3r: 'cupientes huiusmodi cultum divinum et pia opera augmentare'.

40 See Chapter 5, 243–4, for further discussion of Pierre de Luxembourg and his cult.

41 Beurrier, *Histoire*, 7–11.

42 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 90; Beurrier, *Histoire*, 58–61.

43 Beurrier, *Histoire*, 58–9.

44 Testament of 1374, in *Chronique des régnes de Jean II et de Charles V*, ed. R. Delachenal, 2 vols (Paris, 1910–20), ii, 190.

d'or (equivalent to 4000 livres tournois) to the Avignon house, dated April 1393, which greatly assisted in the completion of what was always planned as a rather grand foundation, did not demand specific liturgical services.⁴⁵ Rather the stated aim of Charles's 'foundation' – he wanted the first stone laid in his name –⁴⁶ was both to celebrate unspecified obsequies for Pierre de Luxembourg and, more broadly, to 'honour' and 'love' the memory of a man who 'bore himself commendably in life': he too wanted to play his part in promoting the cult of Pierre.⁴⁷ At Rouen one finds two 'second foundings'. Henry VI was responsible for the first in 1445, when he claimed to be the principle founder of the house envisioned by his uncle, John, duke of Bedford. His charter cited his desire to fulfil his 'royal office' by 'producing devotion' and 'increasing the divine cult' as a benefit to 'the souls of the faithful in Christ'. He also mentioned the concerns of the people of Normandy, who apparently lamented the lack of a Celestine monastery in their region.⁴⁸ The second came from Charles VII, who both granted his donation 'in pure alms' and combined the logic of Henry VI with that employed by Charles V at Mantes: the Celestines were to act as 'a new plantation, newly rooted in our duchy of Normandy'.⁴⁹

The depth and range of benefits envisioned seems to have often attracted a high price from founders. Founding a monastery of any scale had, in fact, become a very expensive business. Already at Ambert in 1300, Philip the Fair needed to find 400 livres parisis (500 livres tournois) of annual

45 Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/146, no. 460; see Chapters 5, 214–16, concerning the grandeur of the house.

46 Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/146, no. 460: 'primum lapidem pro nobis, et nomine nostro poni'.

47 Ibid.: 'ad memoriam reducentes quod sanctum est nedum honorare probos viros, qui in seculo probabiliter se gesserunt, sed etiam diligere et eis obsequiis exhibere; id circo nos attendentes quanta et qualia magnifica Beate memorie Petri quondam Cardinalis de Luxemburgo preclarissimi consanguinei nostri fuerint opera et apud Deum acceptabilia, ac apud homines laudabilia; volentes preterea favere benigno ipsi obsequi gratiose, et servitium quod sit Deo acceptabile pro eo impendere futuris temporibus perpetuo duraturis'.

48 Avignon, BM, MS 1438, 59r: 'Regalis solii officium hinc debito peragere non ambigimus dum regios, illis, que et devotionis ardore prodire conspiciamus, in augmentum divini cultus per que Christi fidelium saluti animarum, favores impatimur. Nuper et fide dignorum relatu ad nostre preductum est notitiam, quod cum in nostro ducatu Normanie, nullus sit conventus, sive nullum Monasterium Ordinis Coelestinorum, quod plures Christi fideles utriusque sexus ad ordinem illum singularium gerentes affectum multum desiderant et manus suas pia devotione intendunt'; See also de Beaurepaire and des Essars, 'Fondations pieuses du duc de Bedford à Rouen', 344.

49 Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/186, no., 88: 'velut novella plantatio novita radicata in terram nostre Ducatus Normanie que nullo hactenus oneruit celestinorum monasterio decorari'; Paris, BA, MS 5145, 329.

incomes in order to support just twelve monks.⁵⁰ At Mantes in 1377, founded to house the same complement, Charles V granted 300 livres parisis (375 livres tournois) in rents.⁵¹ The annual cost per monk at these establishments was significantly higher than a contemporary chantry chaplain (c.20 livres parisis or 25 livres tournois) at 25–33 livres parisis (31–42 livres tournois) in the same period.⁵² These requirements would only rise. At the turn of the fifteenth century, Marcoussis required 600 livres tournois of annual income for twelve monks,⁵³ and Vichy (1410) needed 500 livres tournois annually to reach this same number.⁵⁴ Louis, duke of Orléans, planned to build a house in Orléans – which never came to fruition, for reasons that will be discussed –, for which he estimated 800 livres tournois would ensure a secure future for twelve monks and a prior. The revenue required per monk in the fifteenth century thus seems to have risen to 41–62 livres tournois.⁵⁵

The evidence for capital expenditure is not usually forthcoming, although it is worth noting that between two cases where it is reasonably complete – Mantes and Rouen, only around fifty miles apart – the increase is significant. Whereas in 1377, Charles V set aside 1400 francs d'or (equivalent to 1400 livres tournois) to purchase 300 livres parisis (375 livres tournois) of cash rents for the former, his grandson Charles VII, in 1449, found it necessary to set aside 6000 livres tournois to gain 400 livres tournois of viable income to complete what was already a partially endowed foundation at the latter.⁵⁶ These royal founders, moreover, were able to amortize their own gifts; founders at lower ranks would have to pay fines in recognition of the incomes given to the Church, an immortal owner, being forever lost from any potential reversion to higher seigneurs and ultimately to the crown.⁵⁷ Other collateral costs included building expenses. Philip the Fair purchased sites for the Ambert house from the monastery of Saint-Victor of Paris, which he repaid with another 400 livres parisis (500 livres tournois) in rents.⁵⁸ In 1367 at Paris, Charles V set aside at least 10,000 livres parisis (12,500 livres tournois) and wood

50 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 34.

51 Ibid., 170–1.

52 Bériou, 'Les chapellenies', 232.

53 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 265–6.

54 Ibid., 281, 284.

55 'Le testament de Louis d'Orléans': Beurrier, *Histoire*, 321.

56 Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/115, no. 366 (order by Charles V for purchase of revenues for the house at Mantes, June 1379); Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/186, no. 88 (Rouen).

57 Eusèbe-Jacques de Laurière, *De l'origine du droit d'amortissement* (Paris, 1692), 122–34; S. Raban, *Mortmain Legislation and the English Church 1279–1500* (Cambridge, 1982), 21–2.

58 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 34.

from the forest of Moret to build the church alone.⁵⁹ If that was the largest Celestine house, by the fifteenth century the costs seem very large even for smaller establishments. At Vichy, the 500 livres tournois of income provided in 1410 was to be employed in building works until the accommodation was good enough to house a convent. Moreover, this was not the first money he had given for the foundation, since work had begun on the church in 1402: the charter of April 1410 was given, it would seem, to secure its completion in the face of the imminent death of its founder, Louis II, duke of Bourbon (d.19 August 1410).⁶⁰ The house was incorporated into the congregation in 1411, suggesting that between 500 and 1000 livres tournois were spent on completing its construction in 1410–11; presuming similar costs in the preceding years, the total price of construction may well have amounted to c.5000 livres tournois for what was a relatively modest house. Finally, in the testamentary estimates of Louis, duke of Orléans, for his planned house in his ducal city, we find an estimate of total capital required for a foundation of twelve Celestines, including building costs and the purchase of rents: 30,000 livres tournois, an enormous sum by any standard.⁶¹

If a willingness to pay such costs attests to the importance of these houses to their founders, the huge and growing sums required for moderately sized monasteries of even the most austere enclosed religious surely weighed against rapid expansion. This was not unique to the Celestines or even to their French environment. Recent research focused on late medieval England has suggested a similar pattern of rising costs: there, over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the capital expenditure needed for a religious foundation that required landed incomes and buildings rose dramatically, perhaps as much as fivefold.⁶² The reasons for such increases are complex: a full understanding of them will ultimately require far more research across multiple geographies, but the French Celestine evidence fits well with the English model that Michael Hicks has elaborated. On the one hand, the demographic decline that followed the Black Death and its recurrences – and in France, the dislocations of war – rendered incomes derived from landed rents less secure.⁶³ This would have served

59 Beurrier, *Histoire*, 58–9.

60 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 280; A. Mallat, *Vichy à travers les siècles: recherches historiques et bibliographiques*, 2 vols (Vichy, 1890), i, 91.

61 'Le testament de Louis d'Orléans': Beurrier, *Histoire*, 322.

62 M. Hicks, 'The Rising Price of Piety in the Later Middle Ages', in *Monasteries and Society in the British Isles in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. J. Burton and K. Stöber (Woodbridge, 2008), 95–110.

63 G. Fourquin, *Les campagnes de la région parisienne à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1964); G. Bois, 'Noblesse et crise des revenus seigneuriaux en France au XIV^e et XV^e siècles', in *La noblesse*

to raise the level of income required for a secure foundation, while the rising wages that such an environment promoted only increased the costs of construction.⁶⁴ On the other hand, a lower population did not erase the competition among landlords to secure reliable incomes. The rising capital cost of landed incomes/rents, likewise a feature of both the French Celestine and English evidence, makes sense from this perspective: a greater expenditure was required to secure the same cash return, at least with any long-term security.⁶⁵

The fact that French Celestine foundations seemed to subsist largely on defined cash rents derived from lands owned and exploited by others also attests to this new reality. Gone were the days when founders were able to cede large swathes of patrimony to a religious house. From the benefactor's side, this was simply impracticable, even if they were willing to invest large capital sums; from the perspective of a religious order, the promise of fixed cash incomes might seem attractive, but they would surely have also been all too aware that in taking them, they sat at the end of a chain of rights that drew from a variable economic base over which they had little real control.

The days when anyone outside the very highest elites could hope to found a coenobitic monastery were thus fading fast. Away from the houses of lay princes and ecclesiastical magnates, the number of monks at foundation was usually very small. Jean de Nesles founded Offémont with four monks in 1331.⁶⁶ At Paris (1352), Garnier Marcel's establishment was initially planned to house just six monks, while a document of 1414 states that there were apparently only four or five present there before Charles V stepped in to assist the monastery.⁶⁷ Metz (1370) was likewise originally founded to support just four monks.⁶⁸ At Sens (1366), there were only four monks due to Isabelle Bilouard ultimately being unable to add much to the 70 livres tournois in cash rents that supported her husband's chapels, despite her entire legacy being drawn into the foundation.⁶⁹ Karl Borchardt has also brought to light evidence of two further planned establishments at Fondeville (in the Dauphiné region) and Tours, which could not be completed due to funds

au Moyen Âge, ed. P. Contamine (Paris, 1976), 219–33.

64 Hicks, 'The Rising Price of Piety', 98–9.

65 *Ibid.*, 99.

66 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 250–1.

67 *Ibid.*, 85; Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1505 (document recording the reduction of foundation Masses at the Celestines of Paris in 1414), 96.

68 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 217.

69 'Célestins de Sens, obituaires', in *Obituaires de la Province de Sens*, ed. Molinier, 890–916, at 902–3, 907.

falling through. In the first case, a house planned by the provincial noble Artaud de Beausemblant and his mother Alice de Berenger for four monks was cancelled in 1378 due to family members claiming portions of the bequest, leaving the Celestines with only a quarter of what was promised. At Tours (1372), the bourgeois François Macel was only able to provide a third of what was promised for a community of six monks.⁷⁰

For kings and princes, of course, such costs were not entirely unbearable. Larger monasteries could perhaps have been founded if another factor derived from the contemporary spiritual economy had not intervened: the late medieval fashion of investment in a wider portfolio of ecclesiastical institutions, as if hedging one's bets across a range of intercessors.⁷¹ The fact that the Celestine houses founded by princes lacked onerous liturgical services at foundation sometimes meant that these were added in future gifts, as in the case of Charles V at Paris. But it also often coincided with the disbursement of funds to other intercessors. Louis II, duke of Bourbon, was the patron of a number of chapels and the founder of a college of canons in Moulins, in addition to having founded the Celestine house at Vichy.⁷² Royal burials, meanwhile, remained primarily associated with Saint-Denis, despite the interest shown in the Celestines by the Valois monarchy.⁷³ Louis, duke of Orléans, spread his testamentary benefaction among a wide range of recipients, even if the Celestines were his favourites. Having made these promises, it is unsurprising that his desire to found a house in Orléans never got off the ground. Despite Louis being an ardent supporter of the Celestines, there were simply too many intercessors to pay.⁷⁴ For lower-status founders, where the vast majority of funds set aside for religious benefaction would have to go towards their monasteries were they to stand any chance of

⁷⁰ Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 80–1.

⁷¹ Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà*, 250.

⁷² Paris, BA, MS 5145, 288.

⁷³ E. Brown, 'Death and the Human Body in the Later Middle Ages', *Viator*, 12 (1981), 221–70.

⁷⁴ Paris, BA, MS 5145, 47–8: the Celestine antiquarian writer notes that the house of Orléans fell through due to shortage of funds; 'Le testament de Louis d'Orléans' is printed in Beurrier, *Histoire*, 292–335: gifts are also recorded to a number of churches and cathedrals (those of Saint-Croix and Saint-Aignan in Orléans, the cathedral of Notre-Dame of Chartres, those of Notre-Dame, Saint-Eustache, Saint-Pol, Saint-Genevieve and the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris), religious houses (the Benedictines of Nogent-sous-Coucy, Cluny and Saint-Denis, the Cistercians of Cour-Dieu abbey near Orléans, Saint-Sauveur at Blois and Petit Citeaux near the same town, the Augustinians of Saint-Jean-des-Vignes at Soissons, the Carthusians of Bourghfontaine and Paris). Louis also promised to give to all churches within his patrimony, all mendicant houses in whatever town he died in and all mendicant houses in Paris and Orléans, as well as setting aside alms for the poor. On the testament more generally, see M. Gaude-Ferragu, 'Le corps du prince; le testament de Louis d'Orléans (1403), miroir de sa spiritualité', *Micrologus*, 7 (1999), 319–44.

success, the result was small houses burdened with a wider array of services. As seen, at Sens, Metz and Paris, specified liturgical services were required at foundation.

For the order's part, that they were compelled to accept such foundations says much about the realities of trying to build a congregation by way of new houses in this period. On the other hand, that high-status founders would spend so much money putting Celestine foundations at centre stage within their pious bequests and that even some middle-class benefactors would stake so much on attempting to found a monastery says much about the wider benefits they saw in them. All of these founders ultimately traded the opportunity for greater liturgical commemoration at cheaper prices that they might have received by endowing chaplains in favour of the wider benefits, whether personal or societal, they saw in giving to the Celestines.

Other benefactors and benefactions

Beyond the founders of monasteries, the field of benefactors was wider, spanning from royalty, aristocracy and ecclesiastical magnates down to those of a far more modest background. Within the surviving obituaries of French Celestine houses,⁷⁵ one finds especially strong support from those of bourgeois backgrounds, with the administrative, legal and notarial professions being especially prominent.

At the first French Celestine foundation near Ambert, founded by Philip the Fair, the twenty-three subsequent independent benefactors⁷⁶ listed from foundation to 1450 in a contemporary obituary included three further royals (Philip VI, Louis, duke of Orléans, and Charles VI). Beyond this, however, the benefactors were a collection of local notables. From the hinterland, there were two knights (Jean Damieux, d.1358, and Jean de Bourbon, d.1422, the latter of whom professed) and a winemaker (Jean Moreau, d.1413). Despite the house's rural locale, however, the rest mostly appear to be townspeople,

75 In the interests of space, a sample of the most contemporary and complete surviving obituaries have been cited (i.e. those which give clearest indication of benefactor's backgrounds, dating, gifts and services demanded, and covering a good portion of the period). Note should be made here of other collections: Mont-de-Châtres: A. de Roucy, 'L'obituaire des Célestins de Saint-Pierre-en-Chastres', *Bulletin de la Société historique de Compiègne*, 1 (1869–72), 185–93; Gentilly: Avignon, BM, MS 711; Metz: Arch., dép. de la Moselle, H2924; Marcoussis: J.-L. Lemaitre, *Le livre du chapitre des Célestins de Marcoussis* (Paris 1999); Lyon: Claude Berchier, *La fondation du monastère des Célestins de Lyon depuis l'an 1407 jusqu'en l'an 1537*, ed. G. Guigue (Lyon, 1882); Rouen: Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Mm. 155 (suppl. 1305)

76 Note that joint bequests from husbands and wives are counted as single grants.

who usually gave cash rents sited in nearby Orléans. Among them were two who emerged from a notarial or legal background (Guillaume Girault, notary of Orléans, d.1440, and Maria, widow of magister Jean de Beaugency, d.1444).⁷⁷

At the houses founded in urban areas, the cast of benefactors was consistently larger. At Sens, there were at least sixty-four benefactors from the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; scant biographical detail is offered in the fifteenth-century obituary, which may well suggest that beyond Pierre de Navarre, count of Mortain, Charles V, Louis, duke of Orléans, and Philippe de Moulins, bishop of Noyon, the remainder of the benefactors were locals of the town or region and of no great status, a similar spread to that seen at Ambert.⁷⁸ At foundations derived from high aristocratic patronage within urban environments, there is something of a tilt towards other benefactors of a similar status, but bourgeois supporters still retain a prominent place. At Amiens, of the forty-eight known benefactors from its foundation by Charles VI in 1392 through to c.1500, there were two princes of the blood (Louis, duke of Orléans, and Louis II, duke of Bourbon) and an archbishop of Besançon (Gérard d'Athies, d.1404). Eight came from the gentry and lower nobility (the knights Renault de Sarcus, Robert Cordigère, Engourrand d'Eudin and Jacques de Helly, Charles de Hangest, royal counsellor and knight, Jean la Personne, viscount of Acy, Guy, his son, and Guy, his grandson). Eleven were churchmen of Amiens and its environs (from the chapter of Amiens, the canons Enguerrand de Saint-Fuscien, Gerard de Valloy, Thomas de Alays, Pierre Milet and Hugues d'Ailly, who was also a royal counsellor, the dean Laurent de Abello, and the treasurer Thomas; from elsewhere, the curates Jean le Boucher and Nicolas Bouthart, Michel Boit, canon of the church of Lille, and Jacques de Mouson, a hermit priest). Two came from a legal/administrative background (Mathieu de Letrenquie, procurator of the king in the bailliage of Amiens, Tassart le Jeune, procurator general of Athies) and there was one 'doctor' of some description (Guillaume de Harsinis). Of the remainder, a further four are explicitly stated to have been of bourgeois stock.⁷⁹

At Paris, there were at least seventy-five benefactors between foundation and the 1450s. Seven were royal (John II, Charles V, Charles VI, Richard II of England, Leo de Lusignan, titular king of Armenia, Louis, duke of Orléans, and John, duke of Bedford), while seven were ecclesiastical magnates (Jean

⁷⁷ Paris, BnF, MS lat. 11061, fols 107r–112r.

⁷⁸ 'Célestins de Sens, obituaires'.

⁷⁹ *Recueil des documents inédits concernant la Picardie*, ed. V. de Beauvillé (Paris, 1860), 158–65.

de Dormans, cardinal and bishop of Beauvais, d.1373, Guillaume de Melun, archbishop of Sens, d.1376, Clement de Grammont, bishop of Lodeve, d.1392, Jean Canard, bishop of Arras, d.1407, Philippe de Moulins, bishop of Noyon, d.1409, Germain Paillard, bishop of Luçon, d.1418, and Gérard Mauchet, bishop of Castres, d.1448). Nine were of noble or gentry stock, ranging from high nobility (Louis, count of Étampes, and his brother Jean) to obscure petite-noblesse (Alexandra de Besançon, Pierre Cordelier and Jean de Noyant), but with a particular bias towards those whose status was on the rise through various forms of royal service. For instance, one finds Amaury d'Orgemont, royal counsellor from 1395, Jean and Bureau de la Rivière, father and son and successive chamberlains and confidants to Charles V and Charles VI, Philippe de Mézières, the famed crusader who became a counsellor to Charles V, and Alain de Mauny, the Breton soldier who fought in French service under his uncle, Bertrand du Guesclin, constable of France. The rest seem to have been of humbler – if often emergent – backgrounds. Among the latter, there were eight listed simply as 'bourgeois' benefactors (Pierre Rode, Jean Cudoe, Renault de Beauvais, Guillaume Rose, Mathieu d'Aussy, d.1400, Augustin Ysbarre, d.1425, Pierre Coquelet and Étienne Chevron), and a further nineteen of a legal or notarial background within royal service (Pierre de Trillia, legist and counsel of the king in Parlement, Maurice Buignon, procurator in Parlement, Hugues Grand, advocate at the Châtelet, d.1396, Eustache de Morsant, audienier of the king, d.1373; the royal secretaries Robert de Jussy, d.1363, Nicolas de Plancy, Gilles de Tremblay, Nicolas le Diseur, François de Montaigu, Renault Ruffy, Philippe Ogier, d. c.1380, Renault de Molins and Guillaume de Neuville; the royal notaries Oudard de Trigny, d.1408, Étienne de Charité, d.1424, and Eustache Godrie; and the royal clerks, Jean de Coissy, d.1403, Jean d'Arcies and Jean Oleari).⁸⁰

At Avignon, there were at least seventy benefactors from foundation to c.1450. The range was particularly skewed towards those of the highest status here, reflecting the connections of Cardinal Pierre de Luxembourg, the Avignon papacy and the Valois court, all of whom were closely connected to its foundation. Beyond Clement VII and Charles VI, there were two popes (Benedict XIII and Martin V), seven cardinals (Jean de Neufchâtel,

80 'Célestines de Paris, obituaires': Molinier has here transcribed an obituary, c.1450, original found in Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 574, and a more exhaustive history of foundations among the order, c.1578, original found in Paris, BA, MS 930. The same social mix of benefactors is described in S. Roussel, 'En pur et vrai don: donateurs et donations pieuses aux Célestins de Paris à la fin du Moyen Âge', *École nationale des Chartes: positions des thèses 2008*, 231–2.

Jean-Allarmet de Brogny, Amédée de Saluces, Pierre Amielh de Brenac, Pierre de Fetigny, Hugues de Saint-Martial and Pierre de Foix), six bishops (André de Luxembourg, brother of Pierre de Luxembourg and bishop of Cambrai, François de Conziè, archbishop of Narbonne and papal chamberlain, Philippe de Moulins, archbishop of Noyon, Juan de Baufés, bishop of Lleida, Jean Rolin, bishop of Autun, and Giovanni Beulardi, bishop of Forlì) and four princes (Louis, duke of Orléans, John, duke of Berry, Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy, and Gian Galeazzo Visconti, duke of Milan). One also finds two other members of the powerful Luxembourg family (Pierre de Luxembourg's brother and sister, Jean de Luxembourg, count of Conversano, and Jeanne de Luxembourg, countess of Ligny). But as at the other monasteries, those of a legal or notarial profession were well represented (Jean Lemosini, procurator and papal notary, Galhardus de nova ecclesia, doctor of law and auditor of the papal palace, Jacques Poulieri, doctor of law and papal clerk, Hugues Filhoti, doctor of law, Thomas Trotet, doctor of law in papal service, Pons Trenquerii, doctor of law, Jean de Vernhio, registrar of apostolic letters, Jean Magini, papal secretary, Jean Louis, papal notary, Henri Dumont, secretary of the cardinal of Florence, Jean de Bordes, notary, and Urban André, notary).⁸¹

If one finds a greater breadth of social backgrounds here than among the founders of houses, it is also clear from this information that many of the lower-status benefactors often had important links to members of the elite who were already Celestine supporters. At Paris, the trend of benefaction from the royal chancellery is particularly obvious, as is the support from those in close political and/or military service to the Valois monarchy. Avignon can also be seen to have enjoyed a certain popularity with papal notaries. The primary conduit of Celestine support thus seems to have sprung from royal and ecclesiastical elites and flowed downwards, but in at least one key case – the early involvement of the royal notary Robert de Jussy and the wider body of the College of the Notaries and Secretaries of the King in getting the Paris house off the ground (1352) – the monarchy's interest in the Celestines was clearly aroused to some extent by the actions of their servants in legal/notarial functions.⁸² This fact reminds us of the rising influence of the administrative arms of government in this period. Taking into account the similar signs already visible among the early supporters of St Peter

81 Avignon, BM, MS 1753, fols 6r–32v; see also Comte, 'Les Célestins, le roi et le pape', 240–50, for a study of benefaction beyond the date range here.

82 Beurrier, *Histoire*, 4–6, Becquet, *Gallicae Coelestinorum*, 8. Robert de Jussy apparently negotiated the transfer of the Marcel chapels to the Celestines.

Celestine in Sulmona and the prominence of a former jurist, Pierre Pocquet, in the French congregation, however, it is possible that there was a particular stylistic or even ideological attraction among lawyers and administrators to monks who espoused strict conformity to a body of legislation.

It is nevertheless undeniable that the most significant and valuable donations were still derived from those of a higher status, who were often just as interested in providing patronage and support for existing Celestine houses as they were in founding new ones. Louis, duke of Orléans, became arguably the greatest benefactor of the order in the period under study. The first known instance of Louis's support for the order occurred in 1393–4, as the Saint-Denis chronicle confirms, with the construction of an ornate chapel built into the side of the Celestine church at Paris and supported by significant incomes at Porchefontaine (100 livres parisis in rents and a further 300 livres parisis of rents in conjunction with his brother Charles VI).⁸³ Although unsubstantiated, the claim of Louis Beurrier (a seventeenth-century Celestine) that Louis, duke of Orléans, would spend a further 1500 écus d'or on the maintenance of the house over the years also seems fitting, especially when the lavish gifts of his testament (written 19 October 1403) are considered. There he chose to donate 2000 francs d'or (2000 livres tournois) or 100 livres parisis (125 livres tournois) in amortized rent and a number of liturgical ornaments including his 'grande Croix d'or', for a perpetual, daily Mass and graces over his tomb, and a further 2000 francs d'or to expand the cloister and to purchase a house to serve as an infirmary.⁸⁴ At Ambert, he added a fine chapel and extensively rebuilt both the church and the cloister; he also provided some 2000 livres parisis for the purchase of rents for the house. At Mont-de-Châtres, he founded a chapel in 1400, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, supported by 62 livres parisis of annual rent.⁸⁵ At Avignon, he founded yet another chapel at the cost of 2000 francs d'or.⁸⁶ He also assisted in the foundation of the nearby monastery at Villeneuve-lez-Soissons (1390) founded by Enguerrand de Coucy (d.1396); when Enguerrand's lands were ceded to Louis after his death without male issue, the latter used a portion of them to expand the monastery by six monks.⁸⁷ Louis also played his part in communicating

83 Paris, Arch. Nat., S3808; *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denys*, ed. L. Bellaguet, 3 vols (Paris, 1842), ii, 73; His gifts are also recorded in a contemporary list of foundation Masses: Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3330, fol. 7v.

84 Beurrier, *Histoire*, 301–2.

85 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 36–8, 63–6.

86 Avignon, BM, MS 1753, fol. 11r–v.

87 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 230–7.

the desires of Hugues d'Ailly and other notables of Amiens to Charles VI for the foundation of the monastery there, and himself provided 4000 francs d'or (4000 livres tournois) and gained amortization for 200 livres parisis (250 livres tournois) of rents.⁸⁸ His testament also set aside sizeable funds for the foundation of chapels and Masses in every other Celestine house of the province then existing, although as with his attempted foundation of a house at Orléans, the amounts actually received are open to question. At Sens, the monks stated that they received only half of the 2000 francs d'or promised.⁸⁹ Philippe de Mézières, the famed crusader, key counsellor of Charles V and close political ally of Louis, duke of Orléans, was not only a lodger at the Paris Celestines, but also a benefactor in his own right. He founded a chapel within the Paris house and a liturgical cycle for it, and provided 100 livres parisis in rent and many other gifts to support it. He may also have been influential in the foundation of the Metz house. According to the Metz chronicle, Philippe had been in communication with Bertrand le Hongre in 1381 to ask him to promote the feast of the Presentation of the Virgin in the city: it is not impossible they had an earlier connection.⁹⁰ Among the churchmen, Guillaume de Melun, archbishop of Sens, was not only an important benefactor of the Paris house, but had influence over the foundation of the monastery of Sens, where he approved Isabelle Bilouard's transfer of her husband's chapels to Celestine control.⁹¹

If these high-status benefactors can be seen as genuine proponents of the order, rather than simple funders of intercessory services, it should be remembered that they had the finances, influence and, as will be seen in the next chapter, the broader political motivations to provide less onerous benefaction more readily. More generally, if a benefactor was not founding a monastery and could afford to gain vicarious benefits beyond the basic customary remembrances of the order, they did, either through burial, the foundation of a brother, or repeated Masses. Benefactor burials were relatively popular at Celestine houses. To judge by the obituaries of the houses, there were at least fourteen burials at Paris between

88 Ibid., 209, 215.

89 Beurrier, *Histoire*, 292–334; 'Célestins de Sens, obituaires', 904.

90 'Célestins de Paris, obituaires', 714, 716; Paris, BA, MS 5145, 227–8; Metz, BM, MS 833, 31–2; Chazan, 'La Chronique des Célestins de Metz', 127. Philippe de Mézières was an advocate not only of a crusade against the Turks, but of the celebration of the Eastern feast of the Presentation of the Virgin, in hope of greater unity between the Latin and Greek rites.

91 'Célestins de Paris, obituaires', 710, 722; Paris, BA, MS 5145, 162–3; R. Cazelles, *Société politique, noblesse et couronne sous Jean le Bon et Charles V* (Paris, 1982), 524.

foundation and 1450,⁹² and eight at Avignon,⁹³ albeit that may well only represent the tip of the iceberg: the chronicle of Metz Celestines lists over 100 burials at that house between foundation and 1450.⁹⁴ At Avignon, where the fifteenth-century obituary tends to carefully record the fees given for burials, they generated around 100 florins cash value (equivalent to 110 livres tournois at 1400 rates) each in this period.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, such fees were individually too small to produce major incomes through investment and one can imagine that such relatively modest cash gifts could easily be expended in the day-to-day running and maintenance of the houses. Foundations of brothers who would make constant but unspecified remembrances for the benefactor in their prayers and Masses had a certain currency. There were five foundations of this sort at Paris,⁹⁶ while they were especially popular at Avignon, accounting for sixteen foundations. At the latter, the foundation of a single brother cost between 700 and 1200 florins in cash in the period between foundation and 1450.⁹⁷

92 'Célestins de Paris, obituaires' (Robert de Jussy, royal secretary, d.1363; Guillaume de Melun, archbishop of Sens, d.1376; the entrails of Jeanne de Bourbon, wife of Charles V and queen of France, d.1378; Leo de Lusignan, king of Armenia, d.1393; Julien de Laugée, librarian of the University of Paris, d.1399; Mathieu d'Aussy, citizen of Paris and lord of Villers, d.1400; Pierre Cordelier, knight, d.1401; Philippe de Mézières, d.1405; Louis, duke of Orléans, d.1407; Germain Paillard, bishop of Luçon, d.1418; François de Montaigu, royal secretary; Jean Ysembert, priest, d.1419; Étienne de Charité, royal notary, d.1424; Anne of Burgundy, duchess of Bedford, d.1432).

93 Avignon, BM, MS 1753, fols 6r–32v (Jean de Luxembourg, count of Conversano, d.1397; Pierre Amielh de Brenac, cardinal of Embrun; Gulhardus de Novo Ecclesia, lawyer, d. c.1420; Jean Magini, papal secretary, d. c.1420; Philippona, widow of Pierre de Terris, bourgeois of Avignon, d. c.1440; Thomas Trotet, doctor of law in papal service, d.1445; Jean Bêlard, bishop of Fréjus, d.1449; Pierre Siresmes, who served the Cardinal Pierre Le Foix, d.1449).

94 Metz, BM, MS 833, 37–175. These range from every level of society, from the major families of Metz, like that of the founder, down to butchers (e.g. Collignon le bouchier, d.1436, *ibid.*, 140), tailors (Hennequin le tailleur de robes) and Beguines (e.g. Jeanne de Belmont, d.1405, *ibid.*, 85; Juliette de Belmont, d.1425, *ibid.*, 118).

95 *Ibid.* (Galhardus de Novo Ecclesia, 200 florins; Jean Magini, 120 florins; Philippona, 60 florins; Jean Bêlard, 100 florins; Pierre Siresimes, 70 florins).

96 'Célestins de Paris, obituaires' (Robert de Bussy, royal counsellor, d.1416, one brother; Colard de Calleville, royal counsellor, d.1418, one brother; Oudard de Trigny, royal notary, d.1406, two brothers; Leo de Lusignan, titular king of Armenia, d.1393, and Richard II, d.1400, founded three brothers together; Jean de Coissy, royal clerk, d.1403, two brothers).

97 Avignon, BM, MS 1753, fols 6r–32v (François, archbishop of Narbonne, one brother; Pierre de Fetigny, cardinal, d.1392, two brothers, 1120 florins invested into 50 florins of annual rents; Hugo de St Martial, cardinal, d.1403, one brother for two inns sited in Avignon, as well as a chapel costing 500 florins; Georges de Marle, knight and seneschal of Provence, d.1400, one brother and a chapel for 1000 florins total, half spent on the chapel; Jean de Gardia, papal servant, one brother; Pierre Nutricis, archdeacon of Tarentasiensis, one brother; Jean

At Paris, however, a further two requests for brothers were combined with fixed liturgical duties.⁹⁸

Indeed, further accommodation to the pressures of such foundation Masses became essential for the Celestines in expanding a number of their houses. They did in fact prove popular in this regard throughout the period under study. Anniversary Masses were the most readily obtainable: there were sixty-four in Paris by 1414, although the incomes they provided were individually weak, yielding roughly 40 livres parisis (50 livres tournois) per year for the entire collection at that time.⁹⁹ For those who could afford it and had decided upon the Celestines as one of the principal destinations for their religious benefaction, more regular and more individually remunerative Masses were also very popular. Between 1353 and 1436, thirty-seven of these special liturgical foundations were made at Paris beyond the obligations associated with their foundation (which already totalled twenty-eight Masses per week): these yielded a further 115 Masses per week, alongside others said across the year (see Appendix 2). There were nine at Sens by 1414, totalling nineteen Masses a week to add to the fifteen a week required at foundation (see Appendix 3). At Amiens, there were eight such foundations recorded up to c.1500, totalling twenty-four Masses a week, with four more special Masses spread across the year.¹⁰⁰ Avignon (three major liturgical foundations, totalling at least seven Masses a week and a further fourteen across the year, and six anniversary Masses) remains a notable exception among the surviving records, despite

Lemosini, procurator and papal notary, one brother; Gerard Guy, canon of Saint-Mary's of Villeneuve, one brother, 370 florins; Jean de Fiulheto, papal servant, one brother; Donna, wife of Jean de Gardia, one brother for 1000 florins; Jean Louis, papal notary, one brother for 700 florins; Hugues Blandini, d.1434, priest of Avignon, one brother for 1000 florins; Nicolas Rolin, chancellor of the duke of Burgundy and his brother, Jean Rolin, bishop of Autun, one brother for 800 florins; Henriguetus Tigrini, citizen of Avignon, a chapel and one brother for 100 florins and other goods; Pierre de Foix, cardinal, a chapel and one brother; Giovanni Beulardi, bishop, one brother for 1000 florins).

98 'Célestins de Paris, obituaires' (Milon de Danguel, deacon of Paris, two brothers as well as a daily Mass and burial; Renauld Ruffy, royal secretary, two brothers and a daily Mass).

99 Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1505.

100 *Recueil des documents inédits concernant la Picardie*, 158–65 (Jean le Boucher, curate of Rouverel, weekly Mass for 200 livres tournois; Jeanne Beaupignie, wife of Mathei Duquarrel, four Masses a year for the amortization of 10 sous tournois of revenue for the house and ten capons a year; Jeanne de Hezeque, three Masses a week for 800 écus d'or; Katherine Dally, daily Mass for 2000 francs; Guillerme Bertault, widow of Nicolas le Rendu, a townsman of Amiens, four Masses per week for two fiefs situated in Lihons-en-Santerre; Jean de Colemont, weekly Mass, 12 écus d'or in annual revenues and other gifts; Philippe Berthauld, citizen of Abbeville, weekly Mass, gift unstated; Philippe de Morvillier (d.1467), citizen of Amiens, daily Mass for 88 livres tournois in revenues and other gifts).

the general popularity of foundation Masses in the region.¹⁰¹ It is possible that being the centre of Pierre de Luxembourg's burgeoning cult helped them to avoid committing to fixed liturgical services in exchange for gifts. In fact, the fifteenth-century obituary notes that in the case of Jean Cadard (d.1449), doctor and counsellor of Charles VII, the benefactor was persuaded to exchange the Masses he intended to endow for the foundation of a brother.¹⁰²

At Paris, where the most complete information survives, the income requirements for foundation Masses seem to have risen sharply over the years. In the second half of the fourteenth century, an annual income of as little as 20 livres parisis (25 livres tournois) might suffice for a daily Mass. Meanwhile, between the first (1414) and second (1436) reductions of such obligations at the house – events which will be more fully described below – such burdens were not accepted much below the rate of 10 livres parisis (12 livres 10 sous tournois) of annual income for a weekly Mass and several hundred livres parisis for a daily Mass (see Appendix 2).

Why were the Celestines popular in this regard, despite the presence of so many competitors? The perceived quality and devotion of the celebrants may well have been a factor, as it seems to have been for Isabelle Bilouard when upgrading her husband's chapel at Sens. Perhaps, in line with the declared intentions of several of their royal founders, it was the result of a belief in the benefits brought to Christian society through Celestine houses. Even if many benefactors were not willing to pay for much more than their Mass, they may well have seen added spiritual benefits (for themselves as well as for others) in supporting religious reform or, for instance, in contributing to an order that the kings of France had associated with the spiritual health of the realm.

Nevertheless, for much of the period, the French Celestines seem to have felt the need to remain within a somewhat constrained price bracket when it came to foundation Masses, doubtless induced by the presence of

101 Avignon, BM, MS 1753, fols 6r–32v (Jean-Allarmet de Brogny, cardinal of Viviers, twelve Masses a year to be said in a chapel he built there, 500 florins for buying revenues, 11 florins of cens, a further 700 florins at death, among other gifts; Jean de Luxembourg, unstated number of perpetual Masses to be said in his chapel, 2000 francs d'or for construction and upkeep of Masses, out of a total gift of 6000 francs; Philippe de Moulins, archbishop of Narbonne, two Masses a year for 300 francs; Pierre Juvenis, canon, quotidian Mass, 1900 florins; François, archbishop of Narbonne, anniversary Mass for Clement VII; Pierre de Fetigny, cardinal, anniversary Mass, no special gift stated beyond those for his chapel and brothers; Jean Magini, papal secretary, anniversary Mass for 125 florins; Pierre de Bornan, anniversary Mass for 100 francs; Jean Cadard, royal counsellor and his wife, an anniversary Mass each in a chapel they built).

102 *Ibid.*, fol. 30r: 'Fratres huius monasterii recusarunt huiusmodi onus modo premissis assumere. Idcirco prelibatus dominus iohannes cadardi miles et nobilis petrus cadardi eius filius loco dictarum duarum missarum seu obituum fundarunt in conventu huius loci unum fratrem sacerdotem'.

competition. If the Celestines of Paris received c.20–40 livres parisis (25–50 livres tournois) annually for a daily Mass in the late fourteenth century, a figure rarely attained by chaplains in the nearby diocese of Reims in the same period, the lower limit was in fact a figure close to the subsistence level for the latter.¹⁰³ Moreover, Celestine priest-monks, unlike such secular chaplains, already had significant burdens of their own. They would rotate in saying one of the two daily convent Masses that were part of the regular liturgical round for two-week periods (saying the first one one week, the second one the next), and were required to participate in the Masses for dead brothers, their parents and benefactors that were also enjoined by their constitutions: as a matter of canon law, priests were meant to say no more than one Mass a day.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, although the Celestines may have been able to save on victuals through their ascetic lifestyle and buying in bulk, the additional overheads of running a monastic house – buildings, maintenance, administrative costs – were always likely to outweigh any savings here. At Paris, the generous grounds and buildings resulting largely from royal patronage may have actually become a significant burden on the monks, despite the best intentions of their founders. Their reliance on benefactors involved in royal administration also created unexpected burdens of another sort: in 1414 they complained of the cost of hosting men visiting Paris for business at Parlement or the Chambre des comptes, who they apparently felt compelled to accommodate when these men could not otherwise easily find lodgings.¹⁰⁵ While the Celestines might have been able to secure a somewhat better income in return for Masses than secular chaplains, there was thus still a significant risk that they might give away too many, too cheaply.

Financial insecurity and the problem of foundation Masses

The Celestine houses of this period were never very large communities, despite the fact that they competed well for these supplementary benefactions. As noted in the introduction, the Paris house with all its royal support had reached a size of thirty to forty monks and eight or nine oblates in 1414, but this monastery was somewhat exceptional. By contrast, growth within

103 Bériou, 'Les chapellenies', 232.

104 'Die ältesten Konstitutionen', 456–63 [15]; *Decretum*, D. 1 *de cons.*, c.52.

105 Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1505, 96: 'Unde cum dicta persone hospites parisiis pro suis negociis agendis in curia parlamenti, et camera compotorum [...] habeant in dicto monasterio parisiis hospitari, cum non possint secundum instituta Religionis alibi comedere libere nec hospitari [...] Nam saepe manent dicti hospites per duos vel tres menses ibidem.'

provincial Celestine houses could be painstakingly slow. Offémont, founded for four monks in 1331, was only recognized by the congregation as having a full convent in 1405, a status that technically required twelve monks.¹⁰⁶ It took over thirty years (1370–1402) for the house at Metz to reach the same status.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, recognition as a convent did not necessarily mean that a complement of twelve was actually ever reached. At Sens, in 1414, there were ten or eleven monks with two or three oblates, nearly fifty years after foundation and despite long recognition as a ‘convent’ house.¹⁰⁸ This, it seems, had nothing to do with an inability to find recruits. At Paris, the surviving profession register, recopied in the seventeenth century, shows that the house professed an average of 2.5 new monks annually between 1375 and 1450.¹⁰⁹ At the smaller house of Metz, there were 103 professions in the first ninety-eight years of the house (1370–1468); as seen, they also felt little compunction in turning away those who failed to make the ascetic grade.¹¹⁰

The constraints must therefore have been largely financial. In this regard, one further external economic factor must be taken into view, given the period: the general economic instability that was incumbent upon their war-affected locale. Northern France – where the majority of their monasteries were located – was particularly badly affected by the conflict between the Anglo-Burgundian and Armagnac-Dauphinist parties for most of the first half of the fifteenth century.¹¹¹ Not every house would have caught sight of armies or raiders. Mont-de-Châtres and Offémont were both only a few leagues away from the town of Compiègne, placed under siege by the Burgundians in 1430, although there is no record of disturbance at the houses themselves. Marcoussis was less fortunate, however. A nineteenth-century antiquary familiar with the archives of the house (now largely lost) reported that the lands it drew its sustenance from had been ravaged in the course of the fighting and that their situation only improved with the victory of Charles VII. The house was also forced to open their doors to marauding soldiers in the same period.¹¹² Beyond the most noxious interferences,

¹⁰⁶ Paris, BA, MS 5145, 250–1.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 217.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Célestins de Sens, obituaires’, 903, 907.

¹⁰⁹ Paris, BnF, MS lat. 17744, fols 35r–38r.

¹¹⁰ See Chapter 3, 120–1.

¹¹¹ For broader background to these issues, see Denifle, *La désolation des églises, monastères and hôpitaux*; R. Boutruche, ‘The Devastation of Rural Areas during the Hundred Years War and the Agricultural Recovery of France’, trans. G. Martin, in *The Recovery of France in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. P. Lewis (London, 1971), 23–59.

¹¹² Malte-Brun, *Histoire de Marcoussis*, 113.

however, the broader economic effects of war probably affected many houses of the congregation. If the demographic effects of pestilence had already made the exploitation of landed incomes at a distance a trickier proposition, wartime damage to sources of income, rapid depopulations, and instabilities of currency and prices compounded the matter.

While total accounts of incomes and outgoings in the period under study are lacking,¹¹³ there are scattered but telling signs that a number of monasteries experienced some level of financial difficulty, and especially in periods of fighting. At Ambert, the obituary begun in the first half of the fifteenth century noted that the gifts of Philip the Fair and Philip VI to the house had decreased in value from an annual income of 600 to 300 livres parisis 'at a time of war', and that many arrears had consequently accrued.¹¹⁴ A constitution made by the provincial chapter in 1432 – at the height of conflict around the Île-de-France – suggests a tightening of purse strings, banning the construction of new buildings and the logging of trees (especially the fruit-bearing) without the permission of the provincial prior.¹¹⁵

The most important evidence for financial hardship in the same period, however, comes from the documents detailing the reductions in liturgical obligations at Paris (1414 and 1436) and Sens (1414): within these, the Celestines of those houses claimed they no longer had the funds to support the foundation Masses they had taken on.¹¹⁶ These paint a more complex picture of the causes, however, where wide-scale economic disruption went hand in hand with frailties that stemmed from the spiritual economy of the period: they are thus worth exploring in depth.

The reduction acts of 1414 and 1436: war, fragile rents, and financial crisis

The 1414 acts take the form of petitions by the Celestines and approbations provided by the legate of the Pisan pope John XXIII, Cardinal Alamanno Adimari. Jean Gerson once again makes an appearance, acting as a commissary

113 Paris, Arch. Nat., H3931–4 (Marcoussis), H3935–6 (Paris) and LL1506 (Mantes) contain some limited and scattered recording of rents in the 15th century.

114 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 11061, fol. 108v: 'Sed a tempore guerrarum solum recepimus annuatim trecentas libras: Ita quod multa arreragia debebantur de quibus solui non poteramus.'

115 Paris, BA, MS 791, fol. 72r: 'Item quod priores et alii non leviter faciant succidi arbores maxime fructiferas: sed in talibus habeant consilium expertorum. Similiter nec diruant antiqua edificia leviter vel construant nova quae sint ponderis sine consilio fratrum.'

116 The 1414 reduction document for Paris is found in a 17th-century compilation from the house, Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1505, 91–116; the 1436 reduction is found in Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3330, in a copy contemporary to the act; the 1414 reduction at Sens has been edited by Molinier: 'Célestins de Sens, obituaires', 900–16.

alongside Jean Tudert, the dean of the chapter of Notre-Dame. The 1436 document represents a more independent act, enacted under the authority of the provincial prior Eudes le Roy. A papal licence is mentioned, apparently given verbally to Jean Bassand by Martin V during an Italian sojourn. The only record of a written approbation (Martin V, 11 October 1423) mentions only the transfer of Masses to other monasteries and not reduction, however.¹¹⁷ It is far from impossible that Bassand had obtained further authorization from Martin V directly, but the fact that the act itself could not point to a document may suggest that no direct written approbation for reduction existed. If the 1436 act lacks clear approbation, however, it is stronger on supporting detail concerning the status of incomes and the sorts of things that affected them.

The acts all report that a good proportion of the gifts associated with foundation Masses had diminished significantly in monetary value (see Appendices 2 and 3). At Paris, this was certainly the case for six of the thirty major foundation Masses existing in 1414, with decline very likely to judge by data given (the incomes supporting the amalgamated Masses created by the act) in nine other cases. Another nine were simply declared to be 'not well founded (*non bene fundata*)'. Less information is provided for the anniversary Masses in this act, but certain decline is noted in four cases.¹¹⁸ At the same house in 1436, fifteen of the thirty-six major foundations had shown clear monetary decline from their value at foundation; moreover, the foundation of Milon de Danguel had never reached the value promised by the benefactor. Although the details provided do not usually allow for comparison, at least two of the fifteen diminished foundations (those of Louis, count of Étampes, and Jean Audou) had shown significant decline from their 1414 levels, while those of Pierre de Castro and Pierre Coquelet probably fell into the same category given that they produced no yield at all in 1436. Meanwhile, only two (those of Baudouin de Cerny and Simon de Joinville) had shown slight gains. At Sens in 1414, the details on exact incomes are scantier, but at least three foundation Masses (including the pre-existing *chapellenies* of Jean de Mézières on which the house had been founded) had shown decline in their supporting incomes.

Where reasons are given for such declines in the monetary value of incomes – the 1436 Paris act provides the most detail here – the shadow of

117 It is recorded by one of their antiquaries: Paris, BA, MS 5145, 522; no mention is found in *Fonti per la storia della Congregazione Celestina nell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano*, ed. U. Paoli (Cesena, 2004).

118 Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1505, 104–15.

war and civil upheaval looms large. The foundation of François de Montaigu was founded on the incomes of two houses in the village of Bondoufle: the 1436 act notes that much was lost here, due to the fact that 'all the houses of the said village had been burnt down'. Only one house was salvageable, its rebuilding financed from the proceeds of the sale of another nearby income provided by François.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, Milon de Danguel's gift of the land of Ville d'Avray was left near worthless, since 'on account of wars and depopulation, it was diminished of people.'¹²⁰ If physical damage and depopulation were the causes in these examples, for Jean Oleari's foundation the political complications of civil war were cited. The Paris Celestines had been forced by the king to exchange the original income for one derived from a house confiscated from Nicolas d'Orgemont (d.1416), who was convicted of lèse-majesté for his alleged part in a pro-Burgundian plot. When the Anglo-Burgundian faction were in the ascendancy after 1418, this income returned to Nicolas's heirs.¹²¹ The approval letter of Cardinal Alamanno for the Paris and Sens reductions in 1414 likewise blamed 'wars' for the decreases, albeit among 'other impediments'.¹²²

119 Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3330, fol. 4r: 'pro magistro Francisco de Monteacuto, qui dedit quandam domum cum jardino et xviii arpenta terre situata a Bondoufle, in medio vie qua itur de Corbolio ad castrum Montleheri. Que domus pro presenti non est nisi pars domus nostre dicti loci, quia postmodum ampliata fuit et constructa de novo. Item dedit viii solidos reddituales supra quandam domum sitam in prefato villagio: a longo tempore omnes domus dicti villagii, excepta nostra, combuste fuerunt. Item dedit vi libras reddituales supra quandam domum sitam a Vitry juxta Corbolium. Que vi libre, certis de causis, alienate fuerunt et, loco earum, empti redditus sequentes, scilicet L solidos parisienses supra domum du Croissant, sitam Parisius in Phallis; item xx solidos parisienses supra domum ad signum Cygni, in vico Aufferre; item residuum pecuniarum provenientium de venditione predictarum vi librarum expensum fuit in constructione prefate domus de Bondoufle.'

120 Ibid., fol. 7v: 'quia ad predicta de difficili nostrum consensum dedimus ob hoc quod redditus ipsius terre occasione guerrarum ac depopulatione gentium attenuati erant.'

121 Ibid., fol. 4r–v: 'Sciendum vero quod, pro presenti, prefate vii libre ante Sanctum Liephardum annullate sunt pro nobis, quia jamdudum dicta domus demolita fuit auctoritate regia ad ampliationem platee ante Castelletum, que est inter ipsum Castelletum et Secanam; et in recompensationem juris nostri sic deperditi dederat nobis rex alias vii libras parisienses supra domum Bernardi de Lavaine ad signum de l'Espee, in vico Sancti Anthonii, que fuerant domini Nicolai d'Orgemont, que ad regem devenerant per confiscationem bonorum dicti domini Nicolai. Sed, quia mutata sunt tempora, hec confiscatio abolita fuit et ad successionem dicti domini Nicolai admissi sunt propinqui sui et heredes. Quapropter in illis vii libris sic recompensatis amplius nullum jus acclamare ausi fuimus'; on Nicolas d'Orgemont's downfall and the confiscations of his property, see L. Mirot, *Les d'Orgemont* (Paris, 1913), 209–26.

122 Arch. Nat., LL/1505, 91; 'Célestins de Sens, obituaires', 901: 'guerrarum aliorumque impedimentorum occasione non modicum sint diminute.'

This said, the acts also suggest that the monks' difficulties were compounded by certain features of late medieval benefaction that have already been witnessed. One issue was the dependence of urban monasteries on numerous smaller and scattered gifts, rather than major local patrimonies. Funds to pay mortmain fines were often not provided by the individually modest, discrete gifts given for Masses, as the tables for both Paris and Sens reveal. The scattered and sometimes quite distant nature of the incomes doubtless contributed to the difficulties of consolidating worthwhile incomes, especially with such a small administrative staff of oblates, an issue that conflict doubtless compounded. While the majority of incomes at the Paris house were secured on properties in the vicinity of the city, those cited in more distant Brie seem to have suffered dramatically. The foundations of Robert de Jussy, Pierre de Castro and Pierre Coquelet were all founded on incomes there and they were all in decline by 1414.¹²³ If in 1436, the loss of all yield in the latter two foundations was again put down to conflict, it might be wondered how much the pre-existing issues of distance compounded wartime difficulties to cut the Celestines off from their incomes. Both were in fact expected to return to 10 livres parisien annual value in 'better times', perhaps suggesting as much an impediment to collection as the partial destruction of the sources of the incomes.¹²⁴

Moreover, if incomes might decline, there was no chance of them becoming more valuable where they were rents for a specified cash amount to be drawn from someone else's property. Given that they could not avoid this style of gift when receiving new houses, it is no surprise to see that such rents also seem to make up the vast majority of the revenues cited in these documents.¹²⁵ Indeed, diminution in the cash value of a foundation was not always the cause of the reductions made. Some foundation Masses had simply been accepted for incomes of a value that could no longer support the associated duties. The Celestines of both Paris and Sens rued how many they had agreed to at low values in order to secure their initial expansion. According to the 1414 act, the Paris house, a convent of four to six brothers prior to Charles V's intervention, felt 'compelled by poverty' to oblige

123 Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3330, fols 4r, 6v–7r; see also Appendix 2.

124 Ibid., fol. 7r: 'vix in futuro valere poterit x libras parisienses non admortizatas, etiam si tempus pacis advenerit'; ibid.: 'A longo autem tempore nil valuit nec adhuc speratur valere, nisi tantum x libras parisienses, si tempus pacis advenerit.'

125 Roussel, 'En pur et vrai don', 235, describes such '*rentes*' as the '*forme privilégiée*' of gifts given to the Paris Celestine house in the 14th and 15th centuries.

themselves to Masses with 'small or tenuous foundations'.¹²⁶ At Sens, a house of four monks at foundation, the 1414 act tells a similar story: the Celestines accepted anniversary Masses from as little as 10 or even 5 sous tournois due to their early hardship.¹²⁷ At Paris, while daily Masses had been offered for approaching as little as 20 livres parisis annual income in the fourteenth century – for instance those of Baudouin de Cerny and his wife Marie la Marcaise do not seem to have risen much above this amount –, the 1414 act stated that the amount then required was 40 livres parisis (50 livres tournois) of amortized income. In 1436, it was stated that 30 livres parisis (37 livres 10 sous tournois) were required annually for a priest-monk, and that two were required for the upkeep of a daily Mass; the latter statement was something of an exaggeration, albeit not an entirely unreasonable one given their regular liturgical duties and the possibility of future financial instability.¹²⁸ These claims of rising costs also fit with the context of the wartime instability of prices in the capital. The 1436 act described the escalating cost as necessary for life in Paris, 'which is generally more expensive than other towns of the realm'. Here, difficulties of supply were not uncommon, with the Seine often cut by marauding armies: for instance, the Parisian price of grain rose sharply in 1432 when Charles VII captured Chartres. The well-known tampering with the quality of currency and concomitant inflationary pressures known in this period – a consequence of wartime royal finance – would have also affected both houses, further diminishing the real value of their cash rents.¹²⁹ But if war was a factor here, the Celestines were clearly left more exposed

126 Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1505, 97; 'Sicque ipsa eorum paupertate cogente, plures missas et obitus anniversariis fidelibus, eis cum parva et tenui fundatione offerentibus suscipere constricti sunt.'

127 'Célestins de Sens, obituaires', 903: 'indeque compulsi, videlicet paupertate cogente, plures missas ac plura ac tenuissime fundata anniversaria sequentibus annis successive ab offerentibus susceperunt, aliqua de decem et alia de quinque sol. turon. reddituum super domos ruinosas sitorum.'

128 Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1505, 93: 'Ultimo sciendum quod fundatio unius missae quotidianae multis attentis et considerantibus in tali conventu potest ut videtur rationabiliter ascendere ad quadraginta librarum parisis reddituum admortisatarum, et ubi non est admortizatio defalcatur tertia pars'; Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3330, fol. 4v: 'circa quod primo considerandum est, quod ad celebrationem unius misse quotidiane duo fratres ebdomadarii requiruntur, pro quorum sustentatione in victu, vestitu et aliis quamplurimis quibus natura fovetur, ad minus pro quolibet ipsorum monasterium habet exponere annuatim summam xxx librarum parisiensium vel circa, specialiter in hac villa Parisiensi, que communiter ceterarum villarum hujus regni carior est.'

129 C.T. Allmand, *The Hundred Years War* (Cambridge, 2001), 122; N. Sussman, 'Debasements, Royal Revenues, and Inflation in France during the Hundred Years' War, 1415–1422', *Journal of Economic History*, 53 (1993), 44–70, at 62–3; H.A. Mimiskin, *Money and Power in Fifteenth-Century France* (New Haven, 1994), 61–3.

by the manner in which they drew their income, which resulted from the type of gifts they received.

Compounding all of these issues, of course, was the fact that fixed services were required in exchange for the gifts listed in the acts; the monks either had the choice of trying somehow to maintain the manpower required for the foundation Masses they had taken on, which meant maintaining expenditure while incomes declined, or shedding some of these burdens. They chose the latter: the Celestins of Paris and Sens claimed in these documents that this decline in both monetary and real value was such that they could no longer support adequate numbers of priest-monks to maintain their liturgical burdens. Their number had to be reduced, and they did so primarily by a process of amalgamation, saying Masses for multiple patrons that had originally been separate.

In 1414, at Paris, they combined obligations to form a series of twelve better-funded daily Masses from an earlier mean of around eighteen per day (see Appendix 2). While they stuck to their stated cost guideline of 40 livres parisis for a daily Mass relatively closely, none of the new amalgamated Masses actually reached this value. The best funded among them was the Mass created from the foundations of Étienne Canu, François de Montaigu, Eustache Godrie, Alexandra de Besançon and Pierre Cramette, worth 34 livres parisis per year. The least funded, that of Simon de Joinville, Marie la Marcaise and Baudouin de Cerny, was worth 30 livres parisis per year. Nine foundation Masses were found to be irredeemably underfunded at this point, so much so that they could not be joined with others. In the case of anniversary Masses, the Paris Celestines seem to have been less strict in their control, probably due to the less onerous nature of these burdens. In fact, at some point prior to the reduction, they had added voluntary anniversary Masses for a number of their major benefactors who had not expressly founded one.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, the average upkeep cost of a reformed, well-founded anniversary Mass in 1414 was between 30 and 60 sous tournois per year to judge from the reduction figures; they reduced their burden to twenty-six obits from sixty-four (including voluntary obits).¹³¹

The second reduction act at Paris (1436) recorded further changes, apparently due to the further diminution of incomes and the return to value of

130 Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1505, 104–15. Voluntary obits are found for Marie de Salines, Philippe de Mézières, Hugo Bolieau, Baudouin de Cerny and his wife, Simon de Joinville, Pierre Cocquelet, Guillaume de Melun and his brother Adam, Renault de Molins, Jean Oleari, the Marcel family, Oudard de Crigny, Jean de Coissy, Richard II, Leo de Lusignan, Robert de Jussy, Pierre de Castro, Eustache de Morsant, Eustache Godrie, Pierre Rode and Jean Canard.

131 Ibid., 115.

others (see Appendix 2). They had taken on six new foundation Masses in the meantime, all well founded, with the exception of Milon de Danguail's foundation, although in the case of Renault Ruffy, they stated that they accepted his requests only reluctantly given their struggles with existing burdens.¹³² Whereas the first reduction sought to create new daily Masses from underfunded obligations, the 1436 act looked to limit these daily obligations to a very small number of richly endowed foundations. They would now only say three daily Masses in total, those for the confraternity of the royal notaries and secretaries, Louis, duke of Orléans, and Renault Ruffy: the first two had never been reduced, the former due to regular and remunerative payments from the chancery *bourse*, the latter due to the undecayed 100 livres parisis of the revenue attached to it. Renault Ruffy's was a post-1414 foundation supported by c.200 livres parisis; the Celestines of Paris had clearly become more cautious in what they accepted by this time, and required higher fees. Where they combined Masses, however, they seem to have followed relatively closely their stated guideline that c.60 livres parisis (enough to support two priest-monks at a cost of 30 livres parisis each) was the minimum theoretical rate for a daily Mass. The Masses of Robert de Jussy, Adam de Melun, François de Montaigu, Jean Oleari and Jean and Bureau de la Rivière were combined for six Masses a week, supported by c.50 livres parisis of rent. Four more combined Masses were created following a similar principle, although these foundations were then transferred on to other houses of the province in a manner that will be further described. In total, the Paris Celestines themselves would now only celebrate thirty-four foundation Masses per week, another monthly, and a further six special Masses a year, in addition to anniversary Masses (untouched by the act). The Masses of Charles V and Jacques Marcel were meanwhile joined with the great conventual Mass and Divine Office said every day: incomes derived from foundation Masses were used to support the principal liturgical obligations of the monks, with these in turn adapted to provide constant remembrance for those benefactors involved in the house's foundation.¹³³ This significant reduction – combined with the act's

¹³² Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3330, fol. 3v: 'Sciendum tamen est quod ad susceptionem prefate misse fratres hujus monasterii tunc temporis existentes, attentis oneribus missarum ad que antea tenebantur, assensum suum nullomodo dare volebant, donec tandem repertus fuit modus per quem nec frustratus fuit a spe sua prefatus fundator, nec monasterium inde fuit oneratum, sed magis exoneratum.'

¹³³ Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3330, fol. 2r: 'Hee due misse cum fundatione regis Karoli quinti reducuntur ad magnam missam conventualem et ad officium divinum, attento quod, in ceteris monasteriis, missa conventualis attribuitur ipsis fundatoribus nec aliud onus habere

statement that there were only eleven priest-monks (*ebdomadarii*) at the time, a figure below that with which they could have legally upheld even their post-1414 burdens, let alone the original weight of Masses prior to the reductions – suggests that the Celestines of Paris sought to restrict the numbers of monks, at least for a spell. Indeed, only five monks were professed between 1436 and 1442. Recruitment subsequently resumed at slightly above the normal rate, suggesting some degree of recovery in their financial position by this point.¹³⁴

It was not all one-way traffic, however: the 1436 act appears generous with regard to some of the Masses formerly reduced in 1414. It restored whole or partial observance of the nine Masses simply written off as ‘not well founded’ in the previous reduction. Only the large burden of the two daily Masses founded by Louis d’Étampes was to be omitted for the foreseeable future, since by then his gift was worth nothing. Even here the Celestines of Paris were careful to note that they would not forget the Mass, and would say it if the income ever returned.¹³⁵ Elsewhere, on five occasions, they chose to recognize the income that might return to a foundation (‘if the times should prosper’) in their computation of amalgamated Masses.¹³⁶ If they no longer felt able to support as many Masses as they were able to in 1414, the Paris Celestines nevertheless used the opportunity of another reduction to construct a solution which did not deny as many benefactors at least part of their original foundation.

At Sens, a monastery that enjoyed less elite favour than the Paris house, the situation seems to have become rather more desperate. They were apparently only able to support eleven monks (it is not known how many were priests) in 1414.¹³⁷ Prior to the act, they were bound to handle a liturgical burden of thirty-four foundation Masses a week, and others said less regularly, including forty-four anniversary Masses, alongside the standard Celestine liturgy. This burden was almost certainly legally impossible for them to attain by this point, and was likely to have been a stretch even

consueverunt: et etiam majoris est meriti propter assistentiam fratrum in caritate et devotione Deo servientium.’

¹³⁴ Paris, BnF, MS lat. 17744, fols 35r–38r. In the preceding seven years (1429–36), there were 15 professions, while from 1443–9 there were 20 professions (2.85 per year on average).

¹³⁵ Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3330, fol. 7r–v: ‘Verumtamen quotienscumque redditus prefate foundationis provenient pro quota secundum quod plus vel minus valuerint, misse prefate celebrabuntur, habendo respectum ad principalem foundationem.’

¹³⁶ Ibid., fols 4r, 5r–v, 6r–v, 7r: the Masses of François de Montagiu, Garnier Marcel, Simon de Joinville, Pierre Castro and Pierre Cramette.

¹³⁷ ‘Célestins de Sens, obituaires’, 907.

ignoring canon law. They applied to have the burden reduced to twelve Masses a week, with up to twenty-six further Masses spread across the year (see Appendix 3) and twenty-six anniversary Masses.¹³⁸

Also worthy of note are the transfers of Masses from the Paris house recorded in the 1436 reduction, since they appear to illustrate the fortunes of other houses within the congregation.¹³⁹ The Paris house offloaded some of their amalgamated Masses to others within the order at the same point as 'reluctantly' accepting the foundations of Renault Ruffy and Guillaume de Neuville. In the first of the transfers described (undated, but before 1436), those moved away from Paris were the amalgamated daily Mass due for Garnier Marcel, Eustache de Morsant, Baudouin de Cerny, Marie la Marcaise and Simon de Joinville (worth 66 livres parisis a year in total), that due once a week for Jean de Coissy and Philippe de Moulins, bishop of Noyon (worth at least 100 livres parisis), and another daily Mass, for Étienne Canu, Alexandra de Besançon and Jean Audou (60 livres parisis). The first two were transferred to the monasteries of Sens and Lyon, who would hold four Masses a week each; the third was to be said in rotation by the houses of the province.¹⁴⁰ In the other transfer (1425), the amalgamated thrice-weekly Mass of Pierre de Castro, Pierre Coquelet, Eustache Godrie and Pierre Cramette, worth 26 livres parisis in total, was to the monasteries of Offémont, Colombier and Mont-de-Châtres: each was to celebrate one Mass a week.¹⁴¹ To support this, however, the Paris Celestines did not transfer the original decayed incomes but rather the sizeable new gifts of the foundation Masses of Renault Ruffy and Guillaume de Neuville, which were themselves to be supported by the incomes derived from the transferred amalgamated Mass. They apparently 'satisfied' the new benefactors, Renault and Guillaume, with this arrangement, perhaps a testament to the prestigious reputation of their intercession by this point. The result was that Sens, Lyon and the houses of the province involved in the first transfer received their respective shares of 2500 écus d'or in cash and 24 livres parisis in rents from the gifts of Renault Ruffy for the fifteen Masses a week described above, while Renault's daily Mass and foundation of a

¹³⁸ On the anniversary Masses, see *ibid.*, 909–15.

¹³⁹ Such transfers were in fact used intermittently for a century after these reductions: see the documents transcribed in Paris Arch. Nat., LL/1505, 127–46. However, the documents recording later transfers merely state that a house had been obliged to a new Mass, and the fee paid by Paris for the transfer, and thus resist further analysis.

¹⁴⁰ Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3330, fols 2r, 6r–v.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 7r; the dating is provided by the transcribed contract in Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1505, 127–30.

brother were to be supported by the former incomes of those obligations transferred, totalling over 200 livres parisis.¹⁴² A similar reversal occurred in the second case; the 600 écus d'or of Guillaume de Neuville's foundation were redirected to Offémont, Colombier and Mont-de-Châtres, which each received 200 écus. To support Guillaume's foundation at Paris they assigned 36 livres parisis of amortized rent, although the remaining incomes of the amalgamated Masses they transferred were only 26 livres parisis, leaving a 10 livres deficit that the Paris house had to find from elsewhere.¹⁴³

In the first case, the Paris Celestines had effectively farmed out a new donation for a decrease of service (fifteen Masses a week were relinquished, while they only took on a daily Mass). If that was a gain for them, as perhaps was the fact that the new daily Mass of Renault Ruffy was very securely funded at over 200 livres parisis of assigned annual income, the trading of significant capital reserves to other houses of the province (rather than incomes that had been in decay) may well have been viewed positively by the recipients. In the latter case, the Paris Celestines in fact lost a certain premium without any decrease in total service (three Masses were exchanged for three Masses), the benefits accrued by the fashionable mother house being pushed out to the smaller houses of the congregation.¹⁴⁴ Perhaps these small, rural houses were in even greater need of strong incomes than Paris, however grave the circumstances were at the latter. Mont-de-Châtres and nearby Offémont, as described earlier, were especially likely to have been faced with a war-torn environment around this time.

The reliability of the information recorded in these acts and the actual gravity of any financial crisis might still be questioned, given the comparative lack of supporting detail from other documents. George Coulton, who had looked briefly at the 1436 act, evidently gave little weight to their claims, since he described the Celestine actions as a 'wholesale neglect' of obligations. Those comments, however, occur in the midst of a diatribe against the whole practice of foundation Masses, and he does not descend to any analysis of the details provided nor take into account the external oversight of the 1414 acts. In fact, he seems to have been entirely unaware of the existence of reductions in 1414.¹⁴⁵ The difficulties they report – damage, depopulation and diminished access to income due to war and escalating costs – do at the very least seem highly realistic in the context

142 Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3330, fol. 3v.

143 Ibid., fol. 5r.

144 Roussel, 'En pur et vrai don', 235, makes the same conclusion.

145 Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, iii, 81–2.

of time and place. The Sens house was founded with a relatively weak financial base, and there is little reason to doubt both their desperation in taking on poorly funded Masses or their susceptibility to the weakening of any of their incomes. Paris, if likewise founded on a relatively marginal base –the *chapellenies* of the Marcel family –, had of course benefitted from significant royal gifts that did not always carry burdens. But there the economic effects of the conflict are known to have been particularly harsh. The fact that the 1436 act coincides with a time of particular upheaval and uncertainties in Paris, with the return of the Dauphin in April of that year, was probably no coincidence.¹⁴⁶ If neither house seems to have been quite on the point of dissolution, it is hard to believe, on the other hand, that they were attempting to contain or reduce the numbers of inmates simply to improve the standard of living far beyond what was mandated in their constitutions, especially given what has already been seen of French Celestine ascetic scrupulosity.

The possibility of any grave deceit in the recording of these difficulties seems further diminished by the fact that these documents were created at all. If they had wished to reduce Masses beyond the measure of their financial needs, surely a more ad hoc solution was preferable. The Sens document notes that the foundation Masses of Isabelle Bilouard and her husband Jean de Mézières had in fact already been reduced from fifteen Masses a month to four due to lack of manpower on the command of a vicar-general of the order.¹⁴⁷ It is hard to see why similar arrangements could not have been used for these later reductions. As an exempt order, they were highly unlikely to be scrutinized by ecclesiastical authorities about their reductions unless there was a serious external complaint. It would surely not have been difficult, moreover, to hide the fact of any ad hoc omission from benefactors' descendants where the foundations were relatively old. It is true that in England there was enough concern about such manoeuvres that the Statute of Westminster II allowed descendants to claim back gifts if the enjoined services were not performed; and yet, even there, the general practice seems to have been to let chantries die out quietly as the gifts diminished.¹⁴⁸ In France too, Augustine Molinier

¹⁴⁶ Boutruche, 'Devstiation of Rural Areas'.

¹⁴⁷ 'Célestins de Sens, obituaires', 907.

¹⁴⁸ B. Thompson, '*Habendum et tenendum*: lay and ecclesiastical attitudes to the property of the Church', in *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Later Medieval England*, ed. C. Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 1991), 197–238, at 213–14; Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain*, 78.

found the Celestine documents to be unique in the detail they offer.¹⁴⁹ It is implausible that this was due to the financial issues being peculiar.

Perhaps a young congregation like the Celestines, whose expansion was very dependent on gaining these sorts of gifts, had to worry about their reputation more than the relatively anonymous and mobile chaplains or older monasteries. At Sens, it is interesting to note that obligations owed to the local benefactors who were the lifeblood of the foundation seem have fared better than others.¹⁵⁰ The Paris 1436 reduction stated that the monks had sought papal approval in part 'lest anyone should take up the sickle for his own Masses in a different field'; that is, perhaps, lest any benefactor should complain to external authorities.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, the broader procedure of recording their actions – and, in 1414 at least, the involvement of the ecclesiastical hierarchy – would surely have left the exact weight of the duties performed and the veracity of their financial complaints open to even greater scrutiny from outside parties than otherwise. That the Celestines of Paris, however apologetically, declared themselves to be 'reluctant' to take on new Masses in 1436 – despite being offered sizeable gifts at this point – suggests concerns that went beyond appeasing benefactors.

The moral difficulties of foundation Masses

The details in and surrounding these acts suggest not only that foundation Masses were not very conducive for monastic expansion in general, but also that they were troublesome against the background of French Celestine religious ideology. This can be sensed in the details of the Sens reduction document. If the aforementioned vicar-general, who had reduced the Masses of Isabelle Bilouard and Jean de Mézières, had indulged in an ad hoc reduction, it is notable that he asked for the observance of certain anniversary Masses founded by Jean de Mézières at his original *chapellenies*. The monks of the house were in fact convinced that these Masses had been removed by Isabelle, Jean's wife and executor, when the monastery was founded. The vicar-general thought otherwise having seen Jean's will, and forced the Sens Celestines to uphold the original obligation: he was apparently 'motivated

149 A. Molinier, *Les obituaires français au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1890), 300–25: an edition of the text is also offered here.

150 The foundations of the widow of Jean Aurefabri, Guillaume Chaton, and the 'certain citizens of Sens' were almost fully upheld, despite rather weak incomes. See Appendix 3.

151 Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3330, fol. 1v: 'Et ut iterum calumpniandi tollatur omnis occasio, et ne quis suspicetur falcem propriam missam in messem alienam fuisse, hoc non propria auctoritate usurpatum, sed de licentia summi pontificis roboratum est.'

by a certain scruple', despite the founders being long dead.¹⁵² The impact of scruple is also strongly suggested by another document, Jean Gerson's tract on foundation Masses, *De sollicitudine ecclesiasticorum*, which was written at the request of the 'Celestine fathers'.¹⁵³

De sollicitudine ecclesiasticorum is a treatise of some complexity and a highly original work of moral theology. No other major medieval theologian devoted so much attention to the issue. It has also largely been forgotten by later historians, albeit that Coulton did treat it briefly in his discussion of the 1436 reduction.¹⁵⁴ Unfortunately its exact date is unknown, although it is usually placed after the time of Gerson's return to Lyon from Constance (between 1420 and his death), when he lived close by to his youngest brother, Jean the Celestine, who was prior of the Celestine house there from 1421.¹⁵⁵ There is nothing to entirely rule out, however, that it might have been written in some form or another around the time of the 1414 reductions in which he was personally involved. In either case, Gerson was certainly dealing with an issue that was of ongoing importance to the congregation.

Its opening makes clear the depth of concern that foundation Masses had caused among the Celestines. The treatise was written in response to certain 'little questions' that the monks had asked him, which he included at the start of the text.¹⁵⁶ The sort of exacting scrupulosity (especially concerning material goods) that was characteristic of Celestine ideology is clear throughout this list. On the matter of reducing their liturgical burdens, they were concerned over whether reductions and amalgamations could be completed without incurring mortal sin through defrauding their benefactors: 'Is it is permitted to omit such obligations without the charge of mortal sin, especially when they seem burdensome, beyond the necessity of chance circumstance or other cause?' (question no. 2); 'Can one Mass be joined to another without defrauding those who desired or instituted the Mass?' (question no. 10).¹⁵⁷ Beyond this, there are concerns about the rectitude of foundation Masses on a more fundamental level. Was it sinful for adequately funded religious to take on more of these Masses (question no. 5): 'Is it right for well and sufficiently funded Church men to receive

152 'Célestins de Sens, obituaires', 906–7.

153 Jean Gerson, 'De sollicitudine ecclesiasticorum', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, ix (1973), no. 455, 434–58.

154 Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, 79–80; McGuire, *Jean Gerson*, 310–1, also provides a brief summary.

155 McGuire, *Jean Gerson*, 310–1.

156 Gerson, 'De sollicitudine', 435.

157 *Ibid.*, 434–5.

new obligations with an increase of service?¹⁵⁸ Did monks charged with effecting the salvation of others neglect both their duties for the salvation of a wider community and their own through the direction of their prayers (question no. 8): 'Should it be permitted to oblige oneself to burdens where all the spiritual fruit in the Masses and other things provided is said to be ceded to the utility of he who has provided the supporting goods?'¹⁵⁹ And most centrally – it is the very first question of the list – were such Masses essentially simoniacal: 'Should it be permitted for churchmen, especially the religious, to oblige themselves and their successors to fixed and determined suffrages in Masses or other canonical offices when temporal goods are conveyed to them, just as common practice holds?'¹⁶⁰ The latter question suggests a spiritual concern over one of the most widespread religious practices in Western Europe. Constitutional evidence suggests that the issue had, in fact, inspired some debate among the Celestines over the years. The constitutions attributed to St Peter Celestine state that 'For no one should a Mass to be celebrated daily or annually be promised without the licence of the General Chapter; nor by *pacto interveniente*, since this is simony.'¹⁶¹ A distinction – in line with Aquinas – here seems to be upheld between Masses made explicitly in return for money by contract, which were unacceptable, and other founded obligations, where the money was given as a gift for the support of certain religious, with any obligation standing as a freely given promise.¹⁶² Nevertheless, a scrupulous insecurity about how easily the line could be crossed in practice may well be behind the referral of such matters to the highest legislative authority within the young order. In the later Italian constitutions, the matter appears almost hidden away: a constitution banning foundation Masses by *pacto interveniente* is found among the requirements for the priests of the order, but with no mention of any need to refer foundations to the general chapter.¹⁶³ The French Celestine constitutional addition that banned new foundation Masses without the approval of the provincial and the vicar-general (1380 or 1383), could be seen as restoring the former caution, but in a twist typical of the French constitutions, allowed the provincial hierarchy (rather than the

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 434.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 435.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 434.

¹⁶¹ Paris, BA, MS 928, fol. 121r: 'Nulli liceat quotidianam missam vel annualem concedere alicui in conventum nisi de licentia capituli generalis; nec pacto interveniente vel precio missarum celebratio vel ordinis nostri consortium concedatur quia symoniacum est.'

¹⁶² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2-2.100.3.

¹⁶³ Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 459.

chapter) ultimate authority on the matter.¹⁶⁴ If concern may have already existed at this time about the financial sustainability of foundation Masses and benefactor relations, it tapped into a debate that seems to have been slow-burning within the order about the spiritual safety of such Masses.

These scruples would have left the monks at a practical impasse had they yielded to all of them. Declaring all such Masses to be simoniacal and annulling them might remove the Celestines from the threat of one sort of sin, and allow them to omit liturgical duties that they were struggling to uphold. But this would not only have made it more difficult to gain further incomes, but would have left the Celestines open to the equally serious sins of theft and fraud. In the grip of such divergent scruples over such a pressing practical issue, however, the fact that they would turn to Gerson, whose thought they knew well, is indicative of the moderating approach to moral quandaries that had also found a place within the religious culture of the order. In what was an essentially unparalleled treatment of the reduction of foundation Masses – perhaps the issue lacked enough scandal in most eyes to merit such treatment – he had few directly pertinent sources to cite. But in eschewing the complexities of contemporary legal or theological thought and instead combining New Testament themes – the Chancellor built his treatment around the apostolic admonition *nolite sollicite esse* (Lk. 2: 22) –¹⁶⁵ with casuist treatments of these quandaries, he again took aim at eliminating the fear and harmful recrimination that might be wrought by Celestine stringency.

Firstly, he took hold of the typical Observant scruple that underlay all their major concerns, the maintenance of poverty. So long as they were strictly guided by necessity, it was no contradiction of their vow for monks to show an interest in gathering material goods for their monasteries, since ‘he who serves at the altar ought to live from the altar’ (1 Cor. 9: 13).¹⁶⁶ While Gerson understood the fear that this appropriate, ‘good solicitude’ might mutate into a concern for extra comforts or greed for riches and ‘that many thorny scruples of conscience’ might thus intervene, he believed there was a middle ground through which the monks could find both necessary sustenance and peace of mind.¹⁶⁷

He went on to state that beneficiaries were obliged to the intentions of the founder, provided that what they asked for was ‘just, appropriate and

164 Avignon, BM, MS 727, fol. 63r: ‘Item ordinatum fuit quod nullus prior seu conventus possint de cetero recipere onus missarum perpetuo celebrandarum nisi cum licentia provincialis vel eius vicarii.’

165 Gerson, ‘De sollicitudine’, 435.

166 Ibid., 435–6.

167 Ibid., 438.

well-founded'.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, gifts were to be held solely for 'the purpose of the temporal sustenance of the celebrant whom they specified'.¹⁶⁹ Further on, he made clear that such obligations could not, under normal circumstances, simply be combined with each other. To hold that there was no problem with this was equated with saying that 'one Mass should suffice for two', and, taking that logic to an extreme, that one Mass would suffice for all mankind for eternity, which clearly was not the case.¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, such Masses could be altered or omitted where there were 'legitimate grounds for cessation'. These included first and foremost 'necessity', which could include the illness of the celebrant, the destruction of the church, and, above all, the dissipation of incomes. Pushed through to its logical conclusion, 'if the benefaction [of an obligation] has been absolutely depleted, since it was given on account of the office, the [receiver] does not appear bound to continue in its service, unless the obligations perhaps remain from a different source'. The other 'grounds for cessation' defined were those of 'greater or more urgent utility', which recognized that general promises could be omitted or changed if they 'became harmful, disadvantageous to morals, dissonant with ecclesiastical rites, or an impediment to the greater good', and the dispensation of ecclesiastical hierarchy, which served more as a safe support in determining the validity of the other two categories rather than a true cause of its own.¹⁷¹

Regarding the practical path forward, however, Gerson emphasized a careful conscientiousness that could not easily be tied to fixed rules. The 'just interpretation' did not look only to 'prelates', but also 'to the university doctors, especially when there can be rational uncertainty on the two prior causes, those of necessity and greater utility'.¹⁷² Nevertheless, he characteristically warned that one could not necessarily expect a hard and fast ruling from any expert: since 'circumspect men' who could attend to both 'general rules' and 'single cases' were rare, 'it is not expedient to ask for a solid moral counsel on all things; nor similarly to expect that anyone can give it, especially if the form of the case on which the inquiry is made is not truly understood with all its circumstances'.¹⁷³ Errors, moreover, frequently arose from 'the fancy of well-matched instructors who quibble, deceive, and sophisticate with each other, defining some cases to be similar, which

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 438–9.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 439.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 445.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 442–3.

¹⁷² Ibid., 443–4.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 439–40.

apart from a unique circumstance, whether added, withdrawn, or missing, are in fact clearly different or opposite.' It was a comment which echoed his frequent criticisms of academic vanity and his more general attack on overly inflexible and legalistic moral thought: his attack on 'jurists' in the *Quodlibeta* springs to mind.¹⁷⁴ For Gerson, the Celestines would have to think for themselves to no small degree.

Leaving aside Gerson's actual involvement in 1414, the shape of his advice can be seen to run through the Celestine handling of the issue of foundation Masses. In part, this was a matter of following the more practical principles he laid down. The Celestines recognized the need for outside approbation. In 1414 at Paris and Sens, as seen, they sought outside approval from two sources, not only gaining a papal licence but the counsel of a university theologian, Gerson himself. In 1436, despite the more obscure nature of the papal permission they received, the detail into which the writer went on this matter recognized the need to reassure minds on this front. The introductory matter of 1436 also laid down the same general premises that Gerson suggested. Foundation masses were licit, as confirmed by the divine law of the scripture ('he who serves at the altar ought to live from the altar'), a source at the heart of Gerson's similar conclusion, as well as by the 'usual custom, praiseworthy and approved'.¹⁷⁵ Reduction was governed by the principle that while such obligations should 'be pure and without any express condition' – that is to say not contractual, but freely and permanently promised –, room was left for a 'tacit' conditionality which might dissolve the obligation, a logic that alluded to Gerson's notion of intervening causes.¹⁷⁶

Furthermore, the lengthy enumeration of Masses and supporting incomes alongside the resolutions suggests that the Celestines were keen to show that the careful independent thought of those who truly knew the circumstances was also well applied in determining the solution. This aspect is most pronounced in the 1436 document from Paris. The Celestines were perhaps less well covered by their papal licence here, and there is no clear evidence of fresh oversight from a university theologian: Gerson himself had been dead for seven years by this time. Here, however, their documentation of the problem and the solutions applied was that much more careful and considered. Unlike in the earlier 1414 acts, the exact situations of incomes

174 Ibid., 440; Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity*, 60–5; McGuire, *Jean Gerson*, 120–2.

175 Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3330, fol. 1r.

176 Ibid.: 'Quia sepius ad arbitrium boni viri recurrendum est in talibus, ut puta quod, licet tales conventiones pure sint et absque ulla conditione expressa, ex se tamen tacitam conditionem important, qua adveniente, consequens est ut nexus ipsarum quo pars una ligabatur dissolvatur.'

and the reasons for their diminution are individually described, as seen in the examples above, and a more case-by-case approach comes to the fore, as, for instance, in the provisions made for Masses that might foreseeably return to value. It should be noted that on the matter of transfer of Masses they broke a key tenet of the Gerson's treatment: that the link between Masses, their celebrants, and their incomes should remain unbroken. This said, the manner in which they did this showed particular circumstantial care to defraud no party: they asked the living benefactors for permission to swap the incomes, and ultimately provided more secure funding for older Masses. The Celestines took into account factors and circumstances here that Gerson did not predict in his text, above all the duty of the mother house to help support the smaller monasteries of the order. It is hard to believe that he would have disapproved of their carefully weighed work, given that he had already stated that he could not take all circumstances into account himself.

* * *

The history of Celestine benefaction and finances in this period both highlights the possibilities for monastic expansion, but also those factors that ultimately delimited it. There seems to have been no shortage of benefactor interest across a range of social ranks, and the French Celestines' expansion is not unremarkable for its period. On the other hand, the funds required to found even small houses were very large, and the nature of late medieval religious benefaction made the outlays required for further expansion difficult to acquire without the addition of onerous liturgical burdens. Additionally, the general economic conditions, worsened by war in France, exacerbated the fragilities of the financial base that resulted. Finally, the Celestines themselves seem to have become rather morally uncomfortable with foundation Masses, especially as their associated incomes began to fail. If the rate of benefaction and expansion seems to slow in the second half of the fifteenth century, it may have owed as much to their own caution in accepting gifts as background factors.

If the French Celestines remain relatively exceptional for the period in their building of monasteries, their story might also help to explain why other Observant Benedictines did not pursue this path. Even if the separation from *conventuales* that new houses provided might have been desirable to some, even if they may have been able to find benefactors interested in such a project (and it is known that these congregations had considerable support among the elites), the difficulties in pursuing such a

path, both financially and on the level of moral scruple, were potentially considerable. Converting *conventuales* had its own risks and quandaries, but in financial terms it was often a simpler task and removed a source of moral ambiguity. The Celestines in fact began to explore this path in the aftermath of these events: their Italian reform work began only eight years after the 1436 act. Even within Gerson's more nuanced framework, he ultimately advised that members of religious institutions should 'diligently consider, in the act of receiving, firstly what is lawful; secondly what is right; thirdly what they are able to do, and what should be expedient not just for the present but for the future' in accepting bequests. With all these things considered, the chancellor thought that it might often be morally safer in the long run simply to maintain the status quo rather than chasing after new gifts in the manner required for rapid institutional expansions.¹⁷⁷ Although unsaid by both, the Celestines' and Gerson's conclusion on the thorny issue of reduction – that Masses could be reduced on account of the decline of attached incomes – could from another aspect seem to admit that such liturgical obligations were commodities with a price, and thus ultimately simoniacal. One senses in both of their lengthy and somewhat ambivalent treatments of the issues that neither could ever truly get past this suspicion. Gerson had provided the scrupulous Celestines with a way out, but perhaps not a way forward.

Nevertheless, the expansion of the French Celestines in this period, achieved despite unfavourable economic circumstances and a wider culture of religious benefaction to which monks were not well suited, underlines the relevance that reformed coenobitic monasticism could find in the late Middle Ages. Even if their expansion pales in comparison to that achieved by earlier Benedictine reforms, in no small part due to the obstacles described here, it still flies in the face of the traditional logic of the pre-Reformation 'decline' of religious orders that they delivered this far from insignificant achievement. Their religion was certainly far from irrelevant at this stage. Rather, amid a sea of competitors, they had found significant support not just for the services that they might provide to benefactors, but, as alluded to in many of the foundation charters, for the presence of their reform within society. As the next chapter will make clear, the French Celestines had achieved a level of public importance and reformist outreach that was highly related to the vicissitudes of contemporary French politics and Christian society.

177 Gerson, 'De sollicitudine', 450; McGuire, *Jean Gerson*, 311.

5. The cultural outreach of the French Celestines

The French Celestines as a political symbol

On 14 November 1432, Anne of Burgundy, duchess of Bedford, died suddenly during an outbreak of pestilence, of the sort that were recurrent throughout the late medieval West from 1348 onwards. The sister of Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, in 1423 she had married Henry V's brother, John, duke of Bedford, who acted as regent in France for the minor Henry VI; she was thus a cornerstone of an Anglo-Burgundian alliance in the years after the death of Henry V (31 August 1422). Already weakened by Lancastrian military setbacks against the forces of Charles VII, that alliance received a further blow with her death: the reconciliation between Philip and Charles VII would be confirmed on 20/21 September 1435. But her political importance went beyond interactions between princes. Writing contemporaneously, the 'Bougeois of Paris' described the effect of her death on the citizens of the town, as well as her funeral, held at the Celestine house of Notre-Dame de l'Annonciation:

The epidemic continued unchecked in Paris; it attacked the duchess of Bedford, wife of the regent of France, sister of the duke of Burgundy, by name Anne, the most delightful of all the great ladies then in France, for she was good and beautiful, and of a beautiful age too, being only 28 when she died. The Parisians loved her. She died in the Hôtel de Bourbon near the Louvre on 13 November, two hours after midnight between the Thursday and the Friday, and with her died most of the hope that Paris had, but this had to be endured. She was buried next Saturday at the Celestines, and her heart at the Augustinians. All the Saint-Germain people were present at her burial, also the priests of the confraternity of citizens, each in a black stole, carrying a burning candle. They sang as they went; as the body was being lowered into the grave the English chanted most movingly by themselves in the fashion of their own country.¹

The Bougeois's words – and indeed the entirety of his journal – give a flavour of the 'public opinion' that existed in Paris at this time: Anne of Burgundy

1 *A Parisian Journal 1405–1449*, ed. J. Shirley (Oxford, 1968), 282.

was considered ‘the most delightful of all the great ladies then in France’ – ‘The Parisians loved her’. It was partly her looks and her age, but also that she was ‘good’: she had in fact been well known for her charity to the poor of Paris. The writer delighted in reporting the opinions, gossip and rumours that he heard, albeit selectively. Public opinion was an increasingly powerful force within the author’s environment. New forms of media abounded in towns and cities – short tracts, posters, pamphlets, very often in the vernacular – discussing the key issues of the day, not least the conflict between the princes and the papal schism.² Moreover, those same events meant that allegiances could change: the Bougeois, for instance, began as a partisan of the duke of Burgundy in the civil war, and his sympathies transferred to the Anglo-Burgundian regime; only gradually did he come to trust the ‘Armagnac’ Charles VII. For those with power, image became an increasingly major concern. In July 1404, Louis, duke of Orléans, then leading royal government for the mentally diminished Charles VI following the death of Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, was so concerned about the spread of written material that defamed his image that he procured a royal decree that demanded punishment for those who wrote or distributed ‘defamatory pamphlets’.³ Symbolic communication – i.e. events and visual expressions – also played their part.⁴ In 1422, Charles VI’s funeral was stage-managed to suggest a continuity of succession from a Valois to a Lancastrian ruler, the minor Henry VI. For the first time at a French royal funeral, all cried ‘Vive le roi’ at the lowering of the body: if the person of the king had died, the office was eternal and had already been filled.⁵

John, duke of Bedford – at whom the people of Paris had ‘murmured’ when he immediately declared himself regent following this burial –⁶ was certainly aware of Anne’s popularity, and made efforts to be seen with her before the Parisians: ‘he went everywhere with her’.⁷ As can be seen in the Bougeois’s account, Anne’s funeral appears to have been used as an

2 On public opinion, see B. Guenée, *L’opinion publique à la fin du Moyen Âge d’après la ‘Chronique de Charles VI’ du Religieux de Saint-Denis* (Paris, 2002); on forms of media, see Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity*, 128–51.

3 Nicolas de Baye, *Journal de Nicolas de Baye, greffier du parlement de Paris, 1400–1417*, 2 vols (Paris, 1885–8), cited in R. Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, 2nd edn (Woodbridge, 2002), 30.

4 See B. Guenée and F. Lehoux, *Les entrées royales françaises (1328–1515)* (Paris, 1968), on the stage-management of royal processions; see F. Autrand, *Charles V: le sage* (Paris, 1994), 756–66, on the importance of buildings and monuments to the royal image of Charles V.

5 J. Woodward, ‘Funeral Rituals in the French Renaissance’, *Renaissance Studies*, 9 (1995), 385–94, at 385.

6 *Parisian Journal*, 183.

7 *Ibid.*, 201, 227.

opportunity to advertise the unity of Lancastrian rule and French subjects, which her death further imperiled. The procession and ceremony brought together townspeople, representatives of the Fraternity of Citizens, and an English contingent. The latter sang on their own at the moment of burial. As much as this acknowledged social distinctions, it effectively mirrored and built upon the love that the people of Paris had for Anne. For the Bougeois, this public, orderly sharing of emotion appears to have fostered a respect for the English: he was moved by their singing. But there was a final element, the location: the Celestine monastery of Paris. Why this religious house and not another? Was it merely a matter of personal devotion? A closer look at the way that royalty, aristocracy and ecclesiastical magnates had previously interacted with the Celestines suggests that there was a public importance to its choice.

‘Grand buildings’ and humble authority: the legacy of Charles V

From their very introduction into France in 1300, royal patronage of the Celestines had always had an element of political symbolism to it. It would be hard to regard Philip the Fair’s invitation to the monks to make a home in his realm as unrelated to his political concerns, since it took place at the height of his conflict with Pope Boniface VIII over royal taxation of the French clergy and the deeper question of the relationship between papal and royal power. Boniface had played an important part in the resignation of his predecessor Celestine V (St Peter Celestine) – it was he who had assured Peter of its legality – and had subsequently kept the Celestine founder under effective house arrest at Ferentino until his death (12 May 1296).⁸ When Boniface came into conflict with Philip, theories of sovereignty were vigorously propounded by both sides. Boniface declared the superiority of the papacy over princes in the temporal as well as spiritual domain in the bulls *Clericos laicos* and *Unam sanctam*, while Philip’s legists pronounced that ‘the king is emperor in his own realm’ and could thus tax the clergy within it without recourse to the Holy See.⁹ Both the disputed manner of Celestine V’s departure and the perceived contrast between the humble hermit, too ascetic to sit comfortably in papal authority (Celestine V), and the worldly canon lawyer, jealous of temporal power (Boniface VIII), made the former’s memory a rallying point for opposition to the latter. Philip joined with Boniface’s Italian rivals, the Colonna family, to promote the

8 J. Favier, *Les Papes d’Avignon* (Paris, 2006), 28–9.

9 *Ibid.*, 31–5.

canonization of Celestine V as a ‘martyr’ saint; through this, they implied that Boniface’s treatment of his predecessor had effectively killed him.¹⁰ The introduction of the Celestine order into France in 1300 formed another plank of Philip’s promotion of Celestine V. How much this was designed for broad consumption is another matter. The foundation at Ambert attracted a degree of popular attention from the townspeople of nearby Orléans, resulting in a slight change of location, but this occurred in spite of a relatively secluded placement.¹¹ Philip had not, it seems, intended to make the house part of public royal presentation. The intended audience for his actions was perhaps more limited: those who knew the king’s affairs well, the same men who knew his argument that St Peter Celestine should be canonized as a martyr rather than a confessor, the same men who understood the intricacies of his theoretical claims against Boniface VIII. Such an audience was not insignificant, but the publicity the Celestines received remained limited in comparison to what was to come between 1350 and 1450.

This ‘public’ deployment of the Celestine order began in earnest in the reign of Charles V, and centred upon the house of Notre-Dame de l’Annonciation in Paris. Charles’s support for the Celestines began with the confirmation of the gift of a *bourse* to this house from the royal chancery in August 1358 (while he was still regent for the captive John II). From the mid-1360s, he subsequently rebuilt the monastery at no small cost.¹² Other gifts included the amortization of some 265 livres parisis of rents in three acts (1360, 1364, 1366),¹³ the seizure of some disused land that adjoined the Celestine house from the abbeys of Sainte-Geneviève and Saint-Éloi in return for compensation in 1377,¹⁴ and the gift of a grand house and gardens, also adjoining, in 1378.¹⁵ The latter two gifts significantly expanded the monastery’s grounds. The house was also to take a key place among Charles V’s so-called *grands ebattements*. The Celestine monastery faced his newly built residence, the Hôtel Saint-Pol, to the South across the Rue de Petit-Musc. Just to the east and north lay a newly built section of city wall, while to the West, the Bastille was being constructed. The house thus stood in a distinctly royal quarter that owed much to Charles’s efforts.¹⁶

¹⁰ Ibid., 57.

¹¹ Paris, BA, MS 5145, 28.

¹² See Chapter 4, 174.

¹³ Paris, BA, MS 5145, 92; Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ 91, no. 20.

¹⁴ *Lettres secrètes & curiales du pape Grégoire XI*, ed. L. Mirot and H. Jassemin (Paris, 1935), 706–8.

¹⁵ Paris, Arch. Nat., S3743a.

¹⁶ F. Autrand, *Charles V: le sage* (Paris, 1994), 756–66.

Although it may appear that the establishment of the Celestines followed a careful plan, the actual conglomeration was influenced by developments that predated Charles. The Celestine monastery at Paris had earlier been founded in 1352 from the patronage of the bourgeois Garnier Marcel and the College of Notaries and Secretaries of the King, who made it the seat of their confraternity. The initial work on the fortification of the Saint-Antoine quarter was begun by Garnier's cousin, Étienne Marcel, *prévôt* of the merchants of Paris, a man who later murdered Jean de Conflans and Robert de Clermont, marshals of Champagne and Normandy respectively, in front of Charles's eyes while he was still dauphin (22 February 1358). Étienne would indeed be executed by the young regent.¹⁷ The Hôtel Saint-Pol, although begun under Charles's auspices in 1361, was built alongside the episcopal residence of Guillaume de Melun, archbishop of Sens, an important royal advisor under John II and Charles, especially in the latter's regency and early reign.¹⁸

Nevertheless, following Charles's choice of the Hôtel Saint-Pol as his principle residence, the other constructions were greatly expanded under his auspices, and bore his permanent mark. He had personally laid the first stone of the new Celestine church in 1365, inscribed 'l'an MCCCLXV, le XVI jour de may, m'assist Charles, roi de France', which today survives at the Louvre.¹⁹ Most strikingly of all, his image was immortalized in statue form above the entrance to this church, alongside sculptures of his queen, Jeanne de Bourbon (d.1378), and St Peter Celestine; the saint was positioned between the royal couple (Fig. 2)²⁰

The queen's entrails were also buried there, and the house became a popular site for burials of royal familiars, including the aforementioned Guillaume de Melun.²¹ The end result was that the Celestines came to mean something very important within royal self-presentation. This much is confirmed not only by Charles's lifelong patronage of the Paris monastery, but also by his later foundation of the house of Sainte-Trinité at Limay-lez-Mantes, on the busy Seine river route between Paris and Rouen. As mentioned earlier, he attended the arrival of the Celestine

17 See R. Cazelles, *Étienne Marcel* (Paris, 2006).

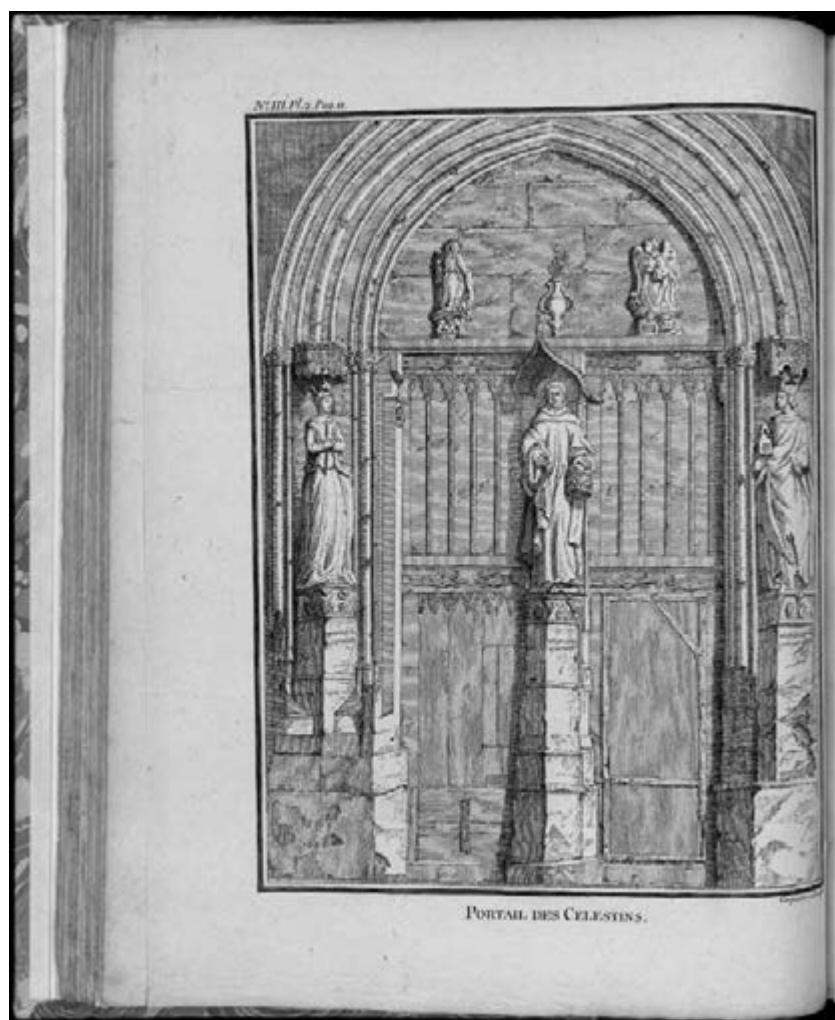
18 Cazelles, *Société politique*, 402–3, 517–18, 577.

19 A. Lenoir, *Statistique monumentale de Paris: explication des planches* (Paris, 1867), 187.

20 A. Erlande-Brandenburg, 'Jean de Thoiry, sculpteur de Charles V', *Journal des savants*, 3 (1972), 218–24; W. Cahn, 'The Angelic Pope and the Portal of the Paris Celestines', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 46.7 (1993/4), 131–9.

21 *Chronique des règnes de Jean II et de Charles V*, ii, 282; Beurrier, *Histoire*, 280, 379; Brown, 'Death and the Human Body', 263.

Fig. 2 Entrance to the church at the Celestine house of Paris, including the statues of Charles V, Jeanne de Bourbon and St Peter Celestine.



H. Millin, *Antiquités nationales*, 5 vols (1790, Paris), i, 11; NB: the image is reversed.

monks there, including Pierre Pocquet, on 15 February 1377.²² He did not just want to be a Celestine benefactor: he wanted to be known as a Celestine benefactor.

²² M.T.C. Duplessis, *Description géographique et historique de la haute Normandie* (1740), 146.

What drew the French monarchy under Charles V back to the congregation brought to France by Philip the Fair? Charles's public support for the Celestines coincided with broader developments for the royal image. His reign marked a period of immense development for the theory and presentation of French royal power: the former was driven through the work of court writers such as Nicolas Oresme and Jean Golein, and the latter through symbolic self-representation at his coronation, entries and processions. Every aspect was aimed at presenting royal power as majestic, undying and divinely ordained for the 'bon gouvernement' of the realm.²³ His was undoubtedly an ambitious reign on this level, and the French historians of the nineteenth century even saw the roots of absolutism in this symbolic aggrandizement.²⁴ In their eyes, Charles V saw to the continuance of the project that Philip the Fair had begun during his conflict with Boniface: to transform the king into 'the emperor in his own realm'. For Augustin Thierry, with Charles these designs had become fully formed and all encompassing: 'The monarchy appeared to be finally committed to the tradition of imperial Rome, supporting the spirit of civilization, and opposed to the spirit of liberty, a gradual innovator, and with the desire to provide for everything by itself.'²⁵

The importance of the Celestines within royal self-presentation makes some sense from this perspective. Certainly, at least, there are reminders of Philip the Fair's tussle with papal authority. Charles V's journey to Mantes to inaugurate the opening of the Celestine house on 15 February 1377 followed just a month after the return of Gregory XI from Avignon to Rome, which occurred despite Charles's protest. In fearing a loss of influence over the pope, the decision to build a monastery of an order founded by Boniface VIII's humble predecessor, and publicly completing it so shortly after failing to prevent the pope's return to Rome might be seen as sending out a message regarding the relative standing of royal and papal power.²⁶ The statue of St Peter Celestine at the Paris house could likewise be viewed in the same context: its sculptor, Jean de Thoiry was paid for his completed work on 8 June 1378, just over a year later.²⁷ The foundation charter of the former

23 On the theorists, see Quillet, *Charles V*; Krynen, *L'empire du roi*; Guenée, *Un meurtre*, 19–118; on the coronation and processions see C.F. O'Meara, *Monarchy and Consent: the coronation book of Charles V* (London, 2001), especially 11–17, and B. Guenée and F. Lehoux, *Les entrées royales françaises (1328–1515)* (Paris, 1968), especially 9–18.

24 See B. Guenée, 'L'histoire de l'état en France à la fin du Moyen Âge, vue par les historiens français depuis cent ans', *Revue historique*, 232 (1964), 331–60.

25 A. Thierry, *Essai sur l'histoire et progrès du tiers état* (Paris, 1860), 45.

26 Cazelles, *Société politique*, 524–5.

27 *Mandements et actes divers de Charles V*, ed. L. Delisle (Paris, 1874), 854–5.

house provides some support for such a reading. As mentioned earlier, it cited a *translatio imperii* that terminated with the kingdom of France, as well as the role of the French monarchy in defending the Christian faith.²⁸ The same document also marked a key juncture in the development of the royal use of the *fleurs-de-lys*, which were reduced to three in number at this time: they now represented a 'mysterious sign' of the Trinity, to which the house was dedicated.²⁹ The impetus for this probably derived from the royal counsellor Raoul de Presles. In a translation and adaptation of Augustine's *City of God* that he presented to Charles V in 1375, he claimed that the heraldic figure of the three *fleurs-de-lys*, symbolizing the Trinity, had been given by an angel to Clovis as a mark of God's favour.³⁰ In deploying this symbolism in the foundation of the house, Charles V imbued his authority with a divine provenance, independent of other powers, including that of the pope. On a broader level, the building of reformist monasteries with such clear royal markings might seem to portray the majestic king taking on duties of positive religious direction that encroached somewhat on the ecclesiastical domain.³¹

There was greater nuance, however, to Charles's interest in the Celestines than claims vis-à-vis the papacy. His interest in the monks began at a time when he had more pressing matters to attend to. It dated back to his regency, when his father, John II, was a prisoner of the English, and the very earliest years of his reign. In August 1358, when he confirmed the *bourse* granted to the Paris Celestines, his authority was gravely threatened by yet another dynastic claim, that of Charles the Bad, king of Navarre. Only a month previously, the young Dauphin had executed Étienne Marcel, an ally of Charles the Bad, for his part in the Jacquerie uprising. Until the beginning of the 1370s, the realm his predecessors had claimed was greatly diminished by the Treaty of Bretigny (May 1360) that his father, John II, had signed with Edward, the Black Prince. In a position of weakness, he relied on a group of royal counsellors led by Guillaume de Melun, archbishop of Sens, a state of affairs that he did not immediately escape when he came to the throne in his own right in 1364.³² Drawing close to Guillaume on a physical level by choosing to reside at the Hôtel Saint-Pol made sense from this perspective.

28 See Chapter 4, 173; on the *translatio imperii*, see Guenée, *Un meurtre*, 26–7.

29 Paris, Arch. Nat., JJJ/115, no. 367: 'lilia quidem signum regni francie in quo florent flores quasi lilium, imo floris lillie non tantum duo sed tres, ut in se typum gererent trinitatis ut sicut pater verbum et spiritus hi tres unum sunt, sic tres flores unum signum mysterialiter prefigurant.'

30 W.M. Hinkle, *The Fleurs de Lis of the Kings of France, 1285–1488* (Carbondale, 1991), 163.

31 Cazelles, *Société politique*, 528.

32 Ibid., 402–10, 461–2, 470–93, 577.

So too, perhaps, did supporting a religious house favoured both by the cousin of Étienne Marcel (Garnier Marcel) and those in royal administrative service: symbolically he made peace with his enemies, and found common cause with those whom he relied upon to effect his rule.

Within such interactions, one perhaps also gains a sense of the original context in which Charles began to shape his image: it was something of a manifesto, an image which in fact always emphasized the limits of authority as much as its ambition. The *couronne*, an impersonal bond between the realm and the office of the king, and *majesté*, representing both the authority and duties that bound those two together, were conceptions that leant both ways in contemporary expression. Indeed, even supportive contemporaries were far from afraid of voicing their expectations of the eternal royal office. This was not infrequently related to the elevation of civil law within the royal state. As Oresme stated, 'good law does more for government than the good prince, for it is more durable and less variable than the prince'.³³ As seen earlier, the legists of the Paris Parlement could see themselves as serving the office, rather than the person of the king, and placed increasing limits on the Roman legal view of the ruler as above the law (*in legibus solutus*).³⁴ And if royal *majesté* increasingly took on a sacramental appearance in the reign of Charles V, then this too brought with it similar expectations of restraint and counsel for '*bon gouvernement*'. Jean Gerson evoked the ideological developments of Charles V's reign when he stated that, 'a king is not a singular person, but a public power ordained for the health of all in common'.³⁵

The public deployment of the Celestines by Charles V seems strongly related to these ideals. While his physical hold of France was relatively weak, he could at least fashion his reputation as a dutiful, protective ruler on another level through founding religious institutions. His confirmation of the *bourse* in 1358 cited his wish for the Paris house to provide prayer 'for the good of the realm', then so troubled.³⁶ His later foundation at Mantes in 1377 explicitly related the prayers of religious to the protection of the realm 'amid hostile swords'; the insecurity of his early reign seems never quite to have left his mind.³⁷ With the memory of division still fresh, the *fleurs-de-lys*

33 Nicolas Oresme, *Le Livre de Ethiques d'Aristote*, ed. A.D. Menut (New York, 1940), 300.

34 Krynen, 'Droit romain et état monarchique', 22.

35 Guenée and Lehoux, *Les entrées royales*, especially 9–18; Guenée, *Un meurtre*, 26–7; Quillet, *Charles V*; Jean Gerson, 'Pour la réforme du royaume', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, vii.2 (1968), no. 398, 1137–1185, at 1155, cited in Guenée, *Un meurtre*, 25.

36 Beurrier, *Histoire*, 7–11.

37 Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/115, no. 367: 'per que etiam omnem statum ipsius regni inter hostiles gladios huc usque conservatum credimus.'

in the same charter thus also spoke to a cooperative, majestic unity: they represented a symbol of indivisible divine unity, the Trinity, which in turn represented the combination of the 'power of arms, the wisdom of learning, and the mercy of princes' through which the realm had long flourished.³⁸ The Celestines, moreover, were not just any religious. It was 'under regular observance' that the brothers were to 'render continual service' to the Trinity at Mantes.³⁹ The Celestine example of austere humility and conformity to legislation thus appears to have been related to an inclusive, uniting royal vision, drawing the mind back in turn to the legally and religiously constrained aspects of the majestic manifesto of Charles V.

The monumental conjunction of his image with that of St Peter Celestine at the Paris house deserves further consideration. While payment for the statues was made to Jean Thoiry in 1378, the same document indicates that the work was already completed at some point in the past: it has been argued that the statues of the royal couple and the Celestine founder would surely have been in place for the dedication of the church in 1370.⁴⁰ If Charles was beginning to sense the possibility of victory over the Plantagenets at the same time, at this point his public use of the Celestines still seems to have been wrapped up in concerns over domestic unity, rather than any claims against papal authority. Shortly after the dedication of the church in Paris in January 1371, he would command the dual internment of Geoffrey de Charny, killed in the defeat at Poitiers (1356), and Arnoul d'Audrehem, killed in the victory at Pontvillain (1370), both *porteurs d'oriflamme*, at the house. The commemoration of heroes here perhaps had a dual aspect, not only looking forward to new horizons but also back to earlier losses: appropriately, it took place in an atmosphere of Celestine austerity and fervent prayer for the realm. If the statues do indeed date from a similar period, might the juxtaposition of St Peter Celestine and Charles V not have something more to do with creating an attractive representation of the latter's own humility before the duties of his office?

Positing that Charles himself was so humble that, under certain circumstances, he might act like a royal Celestine V and renounce his office seems extreme. Nevertheless, the account of the court writer Christine de Pisan,

38 Ibid.: 'et ut signo signatum proprie respondeat tribus videlicet potentie, sapientie et benignitati, que sancte Trinitatis attribuntur personis, armorum potentia, scientia litterarum, et principum clementia ternatio liliorum elegantissime correspondent, in quibus tribus regnum francie a longis retro temporibus pre regnis ceteris floruisse et hactenus claruisse dignoscitur.'

39 Ibid., 'ut fratres inibi sub observantia regulari prefate summe trinitati perpetuum exhibeant famulatum.'

40 Erlande-Brandenburg, 'Jean de Thoiry', 224.

writing in 1404, suggests that he had succeeded in leaving an impression of himself that leant in this direction. She states that, late in his reign, he had intended that 'when his son, the Dauphin, was old enough to carry the crown, he would hand over the realm to him and have him crowned, while he would become a priest and devote himself to the service of God for his remaining life.' Her description states that 'the lordships and honours of the world bore heavily on his conscience.'⁴¹ If she cited the example of the pagan Emperor Diocletian's abdication, her depiction of Charles's decision also drew on Christian ascetic logic: she recalled William, count of Nevers (d.1148), and his retirement among the Carthusians.⁴² Elsewhere, she made clear her familiarity with the 'very well-made' statues at the Celestine house, and also the lives of the monks inside, whom she described as 'living in great austerity'.⁴³ It is tempting, at least, to believe that Charles V's work at the Celestines helped to shape her expectations of the humility and religious duty due from kings. Her comments on Charles V's alleged plan, however, perhaps also spoke to her own time, an age of a mentally ill king Charles VI, whose reign was descending into civil war and whose line of succession would soon be challenged. Amid these difficulties, the symbolic importance of the humble and ordered communities of the French Celestines only increased.

The age of Charles VI and the Great Schism

In August 1392, the extent of Charles VI's mental illness emerged in the most shocking manner. On an expedition to Brittany to arrest Pierre de Craon, the alleged would-be assassin of his friend Olivier de Clisson, the king had an attack of paranoia. Fearing himself betrayed, he drew his sword and killed several men in his entourage before being restrained.⁴⁴ The aftermath of the incident prompted religious action from Charles: during his convalescence, he is known to have made a vow to St Mary and St Denis to visit their churches when he recovered.⁴⁵ This probably stemmed in part from a personal desire to gain absolution for the deaths he had caused. But it was also played out on a very public level, with an ostentatious return to devotion at the monastery of Saint-Denis and Notre-Dame cathedral in

⁴¹ De Pisan, *Le livre des faits et bonnes*, 97–8.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 215.

⁴⁴ B. Guenée, *La folie de Charles VI* (Paris, 2004), 7–11.

⁴⁵ B. Guenée 'Le vœu de Charles VI: essai sur la dévotion des rois de France aux XIII^e et XIV^e siècles', *Journal des savants*, 1 (1996), 67–135, at 67.

Paris that continued throughout his reign. This in fact signalled a shift in priorities towards a broader display of majestic kingship and the religious direction it entailed: he returned to the public royal piety for which his father was noted.⁴⁶ Charles VI's mental collapse was sometimes seen as a divine punishment by contemporaries, caused by his previous lack of concern for the duties his office entailed. His youthful excesses – his perceived overindulgence in tournaments and women, behaviour that distanced him from the majestic example of his father – were cited by doctors and theologians, while others recalled the financial exactions of his government and its lack of concern for the *chose publique*.⁴⁷ Beyond responding to such concerns, orchestrated displays of piety and religious duty perhaps served another purpose: as Charles's illness worsened, they helped to provide public cover for the frequent absence of personal rule and the attempts of others to govern in his name. If the person of the king was impaired in political terms, the majesty of the enduring royal office came to be stressed with increasing vigour through whatever means possible.⁴⁸

The Celestine were an established symbol of royal majesty from the reign of Charles V, and support for them once again became a critical arm of royal piety soon after the point where his son's troubles commenced. On 23 May 1393, Charles VI provided 2000 francs d'or to the Celestine monastery of Paris, set aside to buy 200 livres paris of amortized revenue in support of the chapel of his brother, Louis, duke of Orléans.⁴⁹ A year later he gave 24 livres 13 sous paris of rents, with amortization, to his father's foundation of Mantes (6 May 1394).⁵⁰ Following this initial flurry of gifts, royal favour continued into the latter part of his reign. He and his government were especially generous in easing the financial burdens of the Celestines in what would become a trying time for the congregation. A number of free amortizations were provided, while in 1402 and 1413 he granted tax exemptions to protect them from the costs of war; he also provided three septiers of duty-free salt per year to every house in 1414.⁵¹

His first recorded gift to the Celestines, however, was the royal foundation of the house of Saint-Antoine in Amiens in November 1392, only three months after his illness emerged. It is an event which clearly illustrates the new reality of a monarchy that needed to shore up its public reputation but

46 Guenée, *La folie*, 165–70.

47 Ibid., 148.

48 Ibid., 260.

49 Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/145, no. 523.

50 Ibid., JJ/146, no. 23.

51 Beurrier, *Histoire*, 233–47, 256–61.

which was damaged in terms of personal leadership. The foundation documents state that the house derived from Charles's 'proposal and intention' to build upon his father's support for the Celestines and to commemorate his marriage to Isabelle of Bavaria in the town. The house was not only to pray for the king, his line, and Amiens, but also for 'the good estate of the realm'.⁵² The foundation was thus to celebrate the monarchy and its religious embrace of those it ruled: its very public construction in an important urban centre would have helped to make these aspects tangible for others. Such monumental and symbolic projects also had the advantage that, unlike in-the-moment political leadership, they could be comfortably brought about in a collegiate manner. The foundation, and indeed the words of its charter, were not truly those of Charles, but of his supporters. Hugues d'Ailly, a *maître des comptes* in royal service and a canon of the church of Amiens, led the effort to establish the house, petitioning the support of three royal counsellors, Enguerrand d'Eudin, the royal chamberlain, Jean de la Personne, viscount of Acy, and Renault de la Chapelle, as well as the king's brother, Louis, duke of Orléans, to assist in gaining royal assent.⁵³ The foundation of Marcoussis by Jean de Montaigu, a functionary who rose to the rank of *grand maître de France* under Charles VI, seems to illustrate a similar trend. The founder is said to have formed his desire to found a Celestine house in 1393 or thereabouts in response to Charles VI's illness, hoping that 'perhaps by a miracle of the living God, Charles VI, his master, might recover his health.' If the original desire was to provide intercession for Charles VI himself, however, its construction, which began in 1404, also sought to commemorate royal power. The decoration of its door would come to include statues of Charles VI and his queen Isabelle of Bavaria; like Charles V's foundation of Limay-lez-Mantes, it was dedicated to the Trinity.⁵⁴ In consort, all of these men helped to project the symbolic, religious aspects of royal majesty where the personal exercise of authority had become less certain.

The role of Louis, duke of Orléans, in assisting the Amiens foundation is worth noting. Although his desire to found a Celestine house was never fulfilled, his overall generosity to the congregation is only rivalled by that of his father, Charles V. The context behind his support both mirrors and interconnects with that of Charles VI, his brother. Louis showed no sign of mental illness, but he too had been at the centre of a public incident

52 Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/143, no. 283 (confirmation by Charles VI of the foundation of the Celestine monastery of Amiens, November 1392).

53 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 208–11.

54 Malte-Brun, *Histoire de Marcoussis*, 42, 49.

with grave consequences. Michel Pintoin, the chronicler of Saint-Denis, understood his initial design to build his extremely fine and ostentatious chapel at the Paris house (1393–4) – his first independent act of Celestine benefaction – to be a specific act of penitence for the deaths of four of the king's courtiers that Louis had caused, apparently by accident, at the Bal des Ardents in the summer of 1393.⁵⁵ The relationship was lasting, however, suggesting that it was strengthened by longer-term concerns. As the mental health of his brother worsened, he came to vie with the dukes of Burgundy, first Philip the Bold (d.1404) and then John the Fearless (d.1419) for the reins of royal governments. It would ultimately inspire a civil war that followed the murder of Louis by the agents of John the Fearless in Paris (23 November 1407). Their struggle for control of government had long had public aspects, however. Both sides claimed to act in support of royal majesty and its duties; both characterized their opponents as more interested in enhancing their own power than truly defending the king and kingdom of France. John the Fearless played the demagogue, promising a royal government submitted to counsel and responsive to the financial plight of its subjects, while his followers denigrated the image of his rival, Louis, duke of Orléans: the latter was painted as a man more concerned by his passion for women than the realm and rumours of an affair with Charles VI's queen, Isabelle of Bavaria, became widespread.⁵⁶ Louis, on the other hand, was likewise said by his partisans to act 'for the well-being, profit and honour of the king [...] and his realm.'⁵⁷ Christine de Pisan, a supporter of his, would rail against those who callously endangered the peace of the realm through 'badly minded language' against him.⁵⁸

It is against this background that Louis's patronage of the French Celestines must be viewed. His piety and relationship with the congregation probably ran quite deep on a personal level,⁵⁹ but politics and religion were inseparable in this period. His attachment to the Celestines was well known. On the public level, it seems to have served two interconnected purposes. The first was a matter of personal reputation, a pressing concern both after the embarrassment of the Bal des Ardents and across the period due to the ongoing slights against him. Perhaps one can see the reputational benefits of his association with the Celestines in Jean Gerson's sermon *Veniat Pax* (1408),

55 *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denys*, ii, 73.

56 Guenée, *Un meurtre*, 170–2.

57 E. Jarry, *La vie politique de Louis de France, duc d'Orléans, 1372–1407* (Paris, 1889), 326, 452, cited in Guenée, *Un meurtre*, 171.

58 Quoted in Guenée, *Un meurtre*, 172.

59 See below.

appealing for peace between the warring parties in the aftermath of the prince's death. Here, Gerson's discussion of Louis visiting the Paris Celestine house for advice painted him in a more positive light. If Pierre Pocquet had cautioned Louis over his sins (Louis's troubles were 'money, with which you must repay your debts to God'), Gerson also cited Louis's acceptance of this counsel: the duke promised to 'pardon all of good heart', just as he awaited 'the pardon of God'.⁶⁰ It is heavily implied that Louis had sinned through greed, but also that he was guided back to humility through the Celestines, an example that could serve the elite of the realm well in restoring unity. That association draws the eye back to the symbolic use of the Celestines in the reign of Charles V. The French Celestine congregation was a royal icon uniquely well suited to the governmental crisis of their time: representing humility, order and unity in both their lives and presentation, they could now also be seen as a symbol of a happier, more stable past. Christine de Pisan would indeed associate Louis's devotion to the Celestines – whom he 'frequented every day' – with the princely example of his father; she also found a worthy example for Charles VI within it.⁶¹

The public political importance of Louis's attachment to the Celestines is also suggested by another source: the theologian Jean Petit's defence of his murder by the men of Jean the Fearless – defined as 'tyrannicide' –, delivered before Charles VI on 8 March 1408. Here, Petit's invective not only accused Louis of colluding with Philippe de Mézières and Gian Galeazzo Visconti to usurp Charles VI, but cited this sedition – between Louis and Philippe at least – as having taken place at the Celestine house in Paris, where Philippe was resident from 1380. Jean was keen to make clear to his audience that Louis's attachment to the Celestines was fraudulent: if his visits were 'by great devotion it seemed', it was nothing more than 'false hypocrisy and wickedness', since he used it as a cover for plotting.⁶² There is no external evidence to support the depth of Jean's accusations; what is of interest here is that Louis's attachment to the Celestines was felt important enough for the author to attempt to denigrate it in the most public manner.

Louis's public support for the monks arguably left the French Celestines associated with one party more than another. The Celestines were ignored throughout the first half of the fifteenth century by the dukes of Burgundy, whose religious patronage focused on the Carthusian house of Champmol,

60 Gerson, 'Veniat Pax', 1113.

61 De Pisan, *Livre des faits et bonnes meurs*, 141–2.

62 Enguerrand de Monstrelet, *Chronique*, ed. L. Douet-D'Arcq, 6 vols (Paris, 1857–62), i, 229–30.

in their own territory, and the Colettine Claresses.⁶³ It is also the case that Orléanist supporters were prominent among Celestine benefactors.⁶⁴ This argument should not be taken too far, however. Gérard d'Athies (d.1402), archbishop of Besançon, founded two brothers at both the Celestines of Amiens and Offémont, who were to pray not only for his soul, but also for that of Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy.⁶⁵ Louis II, duke of Bourbon, who had frequently played the role of peacemaker between the factions prior to his death in 1410, began work on his foundation at Vichy in 1403.⁶⁶ The foundation charter, provided in April 1410, does not make explicit his ties to Charles VI or Louis d'Orléans, who were his nephews, nor to Jeanne de Bourbon and Charles V, his sister and brother-in-law, but he was surely inspired by their combined examples rather than by more partisan notions of allegiance.⁶⁷ Like those of Limay-lez-Mantes and Marcoussis before it, the house was dedicated to the Trinity.

If the provision of religious leadership and reform was already an established part of the duties of royal majesty for those who attempted to wield and uphold it in this period, the Great Western Schism (1378–1417), which lasted for the majority of the reign of Charles VI (1378–1422), placed especial weight both on this function and the importance of the Celestines within it.

In France, Charles V had supported Robert of Geneva (Clement VII), who was declared pope by the cardinals who had contested the election of Urban VI and fled to Avignon having failed to gain control of Rome. For Charles, Clement was both geographically closer and more easily influenceable than the Roman option. While one can perhaps see the growing ambition and independence which the French monarchy displayed within religious affairs in this, it should be noted that the reactions of even the most loyal royal subjects came to centre on the reconstruction of a universal unity as a duty which the king had to uphold. The Schism carried with it the practical political difficulty of providing a further obstacle to lasting peace with England,

63 N.B. Warren, 'Monastic Politics: St Colette of Corbie, Franciscan reform, and the house of Burgundy', *New Medieval Literatures*, 5 (2002), 203–28.

64 Jean de Montaigu, founder of Marcoussis was a political ally, as was Philippe de Mézières; additionally, Amaury d'Orgemont (d.1400), Louis's chancellor from 1388 as well as a royal counsellor from 1395, was a benefactor of the Paris house. 'Célestins de Paris, obituaires', 712, 719; Mirot, *Les d'Orgemont*, 29–30.

65 A. de Sainte-Marie, *Histoire généalogique et chronologique de la maison royale de France*, 9 vols (Paris, 1733), ix, 623.

66 Mallat, *Vichy à travers les siècles*, i, 91; M. Sarazin, 'A propos du monastère des Célestins de Vichy', *Cahiers bourbonnais*, 207 (2009), 61–73; Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 91–2; A. Leguai, *Les ducs de Bourbon pendant la crise monarchique du XV^e siècle* (Paris, 1962), 43–54.

67 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 281 (copy of foundation charter of Louis II, duke of Bourbon, April 1410).

which was part of the Roman obedience.⁶⁸ But within learned society, it also deeply troubled consciences: for Froissart, the Schism was nothing short of 'a pestilence that broke into the Church'.⁶⁹ In this atmosphere, partisanship began to seem a less secure path for the French monarchy and became more conditional in royal circles. In Philippe de Mézières's seminal *Songe du Vieil Pèlerin* (1387–9), an extended poetic plea for peace within the realm but also within Christendom as a whole, one can see the shift taking place. De Mézières, like his close ally Louis, duke of Orléans, had been a partisan of the Avignonese papacy and in the person of Ardant Désir in the *Songe*, he confirmed that the Avignonese pope, Clement VII, was 'the sovereign lieutenant on earth of sweet Jesus and the sovereign chief of the Church'.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, by the time of writing, and despite a continued ban on public debate and disputation concerning the solution to the Schism that had endured for most of the 1380s, the author had begun to consider other alternatives to the *via facti*, the victory of one candidate over another by force of arms.⁷¹ With his caveat of support for Clement in place, the author wrote eloquently in support of the idea of a general council to decide between the candidates or elect a new pope entirely, an idea that had earlier, in the summer of 1381, been proposed by the University of Paris and forcefully rejected by Louis, duke of Anjou, who led Charles's minority government at the time.⁷² The character of Reine Vérité was less concerned with who the pope might be than with the reunion and reform of the Church for the good of all Christian souls. It was Charles's majestic duty to effect this: 'that saintly desire of your good father, which was not granted to him [...] is reserved to you by special grace of my Father, to be the principal champion of the Church, to restore to dignity the kings of Christendom', a task which encompassed 'the true union of the Church of God and its reformation'.⁷³ Doubts over continued partisanship only grew, coinciding with the Charles VI's lapse into mental illness in 1392. If, as Froissart noted, the decline in the king's mental health could be seen at

68 For instance, the collapse of mutual efforts to heal the schism after the conference of Ardres between Richard II and Charles VI would stall the progress towards peace between England and France; see N. Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven, 1997), 232–3.

69 Jean Froissart, *Chroniques*, ed. K. de Lettenhove, 28 vols (Brussels, 1867–77), ix, 46; Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints and Visionaries*, 5.

70 Jorga, *Philippe de Mézière*, 435–8; Philippe de Mézières, *Songe du Vieil Pèlerin*, ed. G.W. Coopland, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1969), i, 374.

71 Swanson, *Universities, Academics and the Great Schism*, 67, 70–1.

72 Philippe de Mézières, *Songe*, ii, 293–6, 439–40; Swanson, *Universities, Academics and the Great Schism*, 67–8.

73 Philippe de Mézières, *Songe*, ii, 297.

Avignon as a punishment for the king's failure to lead an expedition against Rome, elsewhere there were those who believed that God had sent this illness as a 'chastisement' of the king's partisanship and for 'the instruction of his subjects' over the necessity of unity within the Church.⁷⁴ Finally, in 1394, with the death of Clement VII, royal support for the Avignonese papacy collapsed in favour of the *via cessionis*, the simultaneous resignation of both popes, as advocated by the University of Paris, who told Charles that he had to secure unity 'if [the king] did not want to lose the title of *roi très chrétien*'.⁷⁵ In the face of a stalling papacy, the withdrawal of French obedience to the Avignonese papacy followed in 1398.⁷⁶

In this context, the Celestines had unique potential as a public symbol. Humble, ascetic, tightly ordered, and avowedly reformist, they stood in stark juxtaposition to perceptions of contemporary ecclesiastical politics and culture. De Mézières spoke at length of the moral impropriety of the Avignonese court in the *Songe*, and directly contrasted the humble figure of Pope Celestine V, founder of the Celestine order, and his shunning of power with contemporary ecclesiastical mores on several occasions: Reine Vérité proposes that Charles VI should put Celestine V's example, alongside that of Gregory the Great, before the two competing popes.⁷⁷ While the option of the *via cessionis* is only implied here, others, including Jean Gerson and Pierre d'Ailly, would later cite the Celestine founder's example explicitly in that regard.⁷⁸ Philippe de Mézières also featured the Celestine house of Paris at both the beginning and the end of the *Songe*, the *pèlerin* setting out his hopes for peace and ecclesiastical unity at the author's chapel within its church.⁷⁹ To do so reflected Philippe's private devotion to the Celestines and his allegiance to the dynastic continuity and legacy of Charles V, who did so much for the house. But beyond this, calling for the solution to a crisis of pride and disunity, as it was interpreted by Philippe and so many others, and the reform of the Church from the seat of a community noted for purity, order and reformist energy would doubtless have appeared significant before informed audiences.

As it happened, public awareness of the Celestines was being actively fostered by both the Avignonese papacy and Charles VI just as relations between the two began to sour irreparably. With the *via cessionis* being

74 Guenée, *La folie*, 150.

75 Ibid., 179.

76 Swanson, *Universities, Academics and the Great Schism*, 90–134.

77 Philippe de Mézières, *Songe*, i, 268, 326, ii, 295.

78 For Gerson, see Posthumus-Meyjes, *Jean Gerson*, 30, 39. For D'Ailly, see below.

79 Philippe de Mézières, *Songe*, i, 89, ii, 499–514.

pressed with increasing strength by the royal government of Charles VI and the University, the Avignon papacy attempted to co-opt the French Celestine order as a symbol of their own, by founding a house within the city walls. Clement's bull (1393) for the foundation of the Avignon house cited his desire to promote the cult of Pierre de Luxembourg (d.1387), whom he had promoted to cardinal at the age of fifteen in order to cement the support of his princely family and who had died at age seventeen. The house would be constructed on top of his grave in the Saint-Michel cemetery. Pierre, of whom more will be said later in this chapter, had been an associate of the Celestines as well as the Carthusians from his boyhood, and carried their style of pronounced asceticism into the secular Church. He became well liked by the townspeople of Avignon, and his death provoked a large outpouring of memorials and gifts (used later in the foundation of the monastery) at his grave.⁸⁰ On the one hand, the cult was a potential support for the moral legitimacy of the Avignonese papacy, advertising their humility before office in the difficult circumstances of the Schism. But without good handling, it could easily have been read the other way, the cardinal's ascetic image contrasting so much with the greed frequently alleged within that schismatic curia.⁸¹

The choice of the Celestines to fill the house – which took place between 24 September 1392 and 22 February 1393 (the date of the first papal letter to cite the congregation by name) – may well have been influenced by Pierre's familiarity with the order.⁸² More broadly perhaps, the austerity of the Celestine religion could serve to publicly align the reputation of the papal court at Avignon with that of Pierre. Most strikingly, however, this choice created an association between the Avignonese papacy and the legacy of a pope who resigned, Celestine V, that would have been hard for informed observers not to recognize: the house was indeed dedicated to Saint-Pierre Célestin. One might venture that Clement and his cardinals were attempting to head off rising diplomatic pressure by paying a form of lip-service to the *via cessionis*. Clement's successor at Avignon, Benedict XIII, would soon make further overtures towards considering this direction, albeit seemingly without genuine intent, shortly after his election in 1394.⁸³

80 Comte, 'Les Célestins du Midi', 179.

81 S. Weiss, 'Luxury and Extravagance at the Papal Court in Avignon and the Outbreak of the Great Western Schism', in *Companion to the Great Western Schism*, ed. Rollo-Koster and Izbicki, 67–87, at 71; Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints and Visionaries*, 76–8.

82 Comte, 'Les Célestins du Midi', 180–1.

83 P.H. Stump, 'The Council of Constance (1414–18) and the End of the Schism', in *Companion to the Great Western Schism*, ed. Rollo-Koster and Izbicki, 395–442, at 399.

The foundation perhaps had another benefit, that of enhancing the symbolic bonds between the Avignonese curia and the Valois monarchy, whose support the former viewed as essential to their survival. By this point, however, the royal government of Charles VI was less certain of its partisanship. With the foundation of the Celestine house by the Avignonese papacy, the Valois government risked losing control of a royal symbol that now appeared full of symbolic import within the realm of ecclesiastical politics and for the *via cessionis* that they had come to call for. It is notable that the government of Charles VI attempted to have the foundation marked as royal, rather than papal, donating 4000 francs towards the construction of the house and church.⁸⁴ During a royal embassy presided over by Louis, duke of Orléans, Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy, and John, duke of Berry (22 May–8 July 1395), which attempted in vain to firm up Avignonese commitment to the *via cessionis*, these ambassadors took the public opportunity, in the absence of Benedict XIII, to fulfil the desire of Charles VI and lay the first stone (26 June).⁸⁵

Lancastrian aspirations

The symbolic importance of the Celestines spread further still around this time. Seeking closer relations with his French relatives and with the support of Benedict XIII, who perhaps had not lost the desire to lay hold of the association that contemporaries saw between the order's founder and the *via cessionis*, Martin I of Aragon attempted to found a house of twelve French Celestine monks in Barcelona in 1407. His ambition was not fulfilled before his death, however, despite the aforementioned emissary activity of Jean Bassand: the foundation was annulled by Martin's successors, Ferdinand I and Alfonso V.⁸⁶ Amadeo VIII of Savoy meanwhile stepped up his interest in completing his Celestine house in Lyon in 1421 – in the territories of Charles VII, rather than his own duchy – at a time when his relationship with house of Burgundy, the rivals to the Dauphin's Orléanist-Armagnac

84 See Chapter 4, 174–5. Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ/145, no. 460: 'quamdam ecclesiam, et monasterium religiosorum Celestinorum ordinis Sancti Benedicti in loco quo corpus dicti Cardinalis fuit reconditum et inhumatum fieri et constitui, ac primum lapidem pro nobis, et nomine nostro poni ordinavimus'; L.-H. Labande, 'La dernière fondation des papes avignonnais: le couvent des Célestins d'Avignon', *L'Art*, 63 (1904), 19.

85 Comte, 'Les Célestins du Midi', 184; the incident is recounted in the 'Journal de Gontier Col', in *Veterum Scriptorum Monumentorum Amplissima Collectio*, ed. E. Martene, 8 vols (Paris, 1729), vii, 479–528, at 509.

86 Borchardt, *Die Cölestiner*, 96–8.

faction, was rocky.⁸⁷ But in terms of 'public' politics, perhaps the most meaningful attempt to make symbolic use of the Celestines in these years came from a more surprising direction: the Lancastrians.

From the reign of Henry V (declared regent in 1420), and especially during the 'dual monarchy' of Henry VI, the Lancastrian royalty and its supporters made use of the imagery of French royal majesty as they vied with the Dauphin, the future Charles VII, who rallied his support to the south of the Loire river, with the support and protection of Yolande of Aragon, duchess of Anjou. While on a dynastic level, Henry V's legitimacy as heir (and regent) to Charles VI was secured by the Treaty of Troyes (21 March 1420) and his marriage to Catherine of France, he also attempted to present himself as a better fit for the royal office than the Dauphin, who was in fact disinherited for the crime of lèse-majesté.⁸⁸ Thus Henry's marriage to Charles VI's daughter Catherine took place on the feast of the Trinity, and his gold saluts d'or (worth 25 sous tournois), struck to announce the impending birth of his son, evoked the theme of the Annunciation. Both themes were strongly associated with the French royal image that had been projected under their Valois predecessors: Charles V had indeed dedicated the Celestine church at Paris to the Annunciation, and that of Limay-lez-Mantes to the Trinity.⁸⁹ The regency government of Henry VI, led by John, duke of Bedford (d.1435), naturally went even further, given the former's legal claim to the throne; coinage, political 'posters' and pageantry were all employed by Bedford's French administration to display Henry VI as a true king of France, not only in his dynastic claim but also in his majestic image.⁹⁰

Support for the Celestines represented another aspect of these efforts. Even before Henry V had invaded France, he sought to found a Celestine house in England, near his new Carthusian and Brigittine establishments at Sheen.⁹¹ The exact story behind this attempted foundation is far from complete.⁹² It is claimed in the *Vita* of Jean Bassand that this important Celestine was sent to England as an emissary of the congregation, although

87 Ibid., 90–1.

88 S.H. Cuttler, *The Law of Treason and Treason Trials in Later Medieval France* (Cambridge, 1981), 194.

89 C. de Mérimond, 'L'imaginaire du pouvoir', in *Représentation, pouvoir et royauté*, ed. J. Blanchard (Paris, 1995), 82.

90 J.W. McKenna, 'Henry VI of England and the Dual Monarchy', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 28 (1965), 145–62.

91 J.I. Catto, 'Religious Change under Henry V', in *Henry V: the practice of kingship*, ed. G.L. Harriss (Oxford, 1985), 110. The Celestine house would likely have been at Isleworth.

92 J.H. Wylie, *The Reign of Henry the Fifth*, 3 vols (New York, 1968), I, 229–31.

the date of any such visit is unknown.⁹³ On the English side, Walshingham states that Henry had 'begun to found' the house, and some buildings were clearly provided: in 1426, Henry VI would transfer these to the Brigittine establishment, Syon abbey, which found a new home in them.⁹⁴ Fabyan's chronicle (1516) notes that an 'Observant monastery' of Henry V staffed by 'Frensh fryers' – by which he must have meant the Celestines – was found to be negligent by the king: they had not 'prayed more specially for hym [Henry V], as they were boude of duety'. Upon questioning, the prior of the community responded that this was because the king 'dayly warred upon their faders & kynnesmen' in France. At this point, Henry apparently sent the monks home.⁹⁵ A more contemporary and more credible account is found on the French side in a legal deposition of the Celestine Adam Cousinot, prior of Paris from 1414 to 1417. This was given in March 1415 in the trial of Jean Fusoris for his alleged conspiracy with the English and concerned a visit that Richard Courtenay and Thomas Langley, the bishops of Norwich and Durham, had made to the Paris house alongside the accused in August 1414.⁹⁶ The bishops, present in France on their first embassy as Henry's ambassadors in the lead-up to renewed war, had commenced talks with the Celestines of Paris with a view to founding a monastery in England, and had subsequently also visited the house at Mantes after leaving Paris.⁹⁷ The deposition states that the Paris Celestines had been reluctant to agree to this request after Cousinot had consulted with his brothers. Under pressure from John, duke of Berry, however, to whom Henry V had written to help achieve the foundation, Cousinot and the provincial prior (who was Simon Bonhomme at this time) allowed Jean le Brasseur, the prior of Marcoussis, the subprior of Mantes, and a certain brother, Jean de Franford, to travel back to England for discussions at the end of Courtenay and Langley's embassy in October 1414.⁹⁸ Another sticking point apparently arose during Cousinot's discussions with Courtenay and Langley during their second embassy (December–March 1415). Cousinot states that during this

93 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 881.

94 Thomas Walshingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. H.T. Riley, 2 vols, RS 28 (London, 1864), ii, 300; *Calendar of Patent Rolls Henry VI 1422–1429* (Norwich, 1901), 380.

95 Robert Fabyan, *New Chronicles of England and France*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1811), 589.

96 L. Mirot, 'Le procès de maître Jean Fusoris', *Mémoires de la Société de l'histoire de Paris et de l'Île-de-France*, 27 (1900), 137–287, at 220–2. The ultimate purpose of the deposition concerns whether Cousinot had heard anything untoward in the conversations of Fusoris with the English, which he claims not to, although he states that he was wary of sending a message to the monks sent to England through Fusoris, due to his Burgundian connections.

97 *Ibid.*, 220.

98 *Ibid.*, 221.

meeting he was told of Henry's desire to found the monastery on incomes derived from other French monasteries (i.e. the alien priories that the king famously dispossessed). The Celestines would not consent to this, probably due to the domestic legal issues it might have caused them. Courtenay had apparently then agreed with Cousinot that the incomes might be found from Henry's royal domain, but in any case, no real agreement with the king was made. The three monks in England returned home in July 1415, 'empty-handed'.⁹⁹ Whatever the exact truth, the project was clearly hardly off the ground before being abandoned, with the coming of renewed war most likely providing the final barrier. Just as the duke of Berry may well have sought consent for an English Celestine house as part of a diplomatic play, in Cousinot's account the monks departed England alongside the final French embassy prior to the commencement of hostilities.

The motivations for this foundation were undoubtedly complex. In part it was envisioned alongside his Carthusian and Brigittine houses as a 'powerhouse of prayer' for Henry V and his family. Henry would pay close attention to arrangements for such liturgical service and commemoration.¹⁰⁰ But there were doubtless aspirations beyond this. Jeremy Catto's discussion of Henry's palace-monastery complex at Sheen relates it to public religious policy. The building of three monasteries of then fashionable European orders – Carthusian, Brigittine and Celestine – coincided with the Henry's promotion of liturgical innovations and new feasts: when seen together, they appear to represent an attempt to foster an authorized, royal-led piety within English society, one that could be set against widespread, if perhaps overly pessimistic, perceptions within the royal court of a popular undercurrent of Lollard heresy.¹⁰¹ There are also other possible public motivations to be found in the symbolism of this planned monastic triangle. While England did not feel the worst psychological aspects of the Schism in comparison with France and Germany, where the geographical divisions of obedience were more tangible,¹⁰² Henry's choices were made at the time of the Council of Constance and seem relatable to ecclesiastical politics. Picking an order popular across the West (the Carthusians), an order strongly associated with the Roman obedience (the Brigittines), and a congregation strongly associated with the Avignonese obedience (the French Celestines) could be seen as a public, diplomatic expression of Church unity. The Celestines,

99 Ibid.

100 Catto, 'Religious Change', 110.

101 Ibid., 110–11.

102 Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints and Visionaries*, 14–5.

however, were also strongly associated with the French royal image, as well as the competing Orléanist-Armagnac faction. If most Englishmen may not have understood this, within cross-channel courtly society there were certainly implications that could have been read into this attempt to co-opt a symbol of French royal authority, just as Henry was making his claims to that throne clear. This might also further explain the Celestines' reluctance to be involved in the project.

With the partial Lancastrian victory and the dominance of the Anglo-Burgundian faction in northern France, however, the congregation evidently allowed itself to be co-opted somewhat by the incoming English court. John, duke of Bedford, made the Hôtel Saint-Pol his most important residence in Paris, a decision that revived the practice of Charles V. Like Charles, Bedford also made efforts to support the Celestine house just across the Rue du Petit Musc. He undertook new waterworks for the Paris house and also showed them particular favour by donating ceremonial vestments from the royal collections of Charles VI, thus renewing the visual connection between monarchy and monastery.¹⁰³ Meanwhile, in 1430, Bedford attempted to found a house at Rouen, the heart of Lancastrian power in northern France. While it does not seem that he got far in this design, Henry VI provided a foundation charter in 1445.¹⁰⁴

Despite the pressures on the resources available to Bedford and the pressing need to secure the Lancastrian claim through force of arms, the maintenance and expansion of the Celestine order thus held significant importance for him. This was surely more than a matter of simple personal piety, although its influence cannot be ruled out: his wife, Anne of Burgundy, is said by the sixteenth-century Celestine writer, Claude Firmin, to have been enchanted by the singing of the monks, which she could hear from the nearby Hôtel Saint-Pol.¹⁰⁵ This apocryphal episode aside, these instances of benefaction may best be explained in light of the symbolic political associations that the Celestines possessed. On the ecclesiastical front, while Bedford's administration gave a certain level of support to Eugenius IV in his desire to override conciliar supremacy, support for the latter viewpoint remained strong among the scholars of Paris.¹⁰⁶ The continued support

103 J. Stratford, *The Bedford Inventories* (London, 1993), 111.

104 Paris, BA, MS 5145, 325–6; de Beaurepaire and des Essars, 'Fondations pieuses du duc de Bedford à Rouen', 343–4; Avignon, BM, MS 1438, 591 (transcription of Henry VI's foundation charter, 1445).

105 Paris, BnF, MS lat.18330, fol. 31v: 'ad mediam usque noctem vacaret, ut audivit matutinas apud celestinos'.

106 C.T. Allmand, 'Normandy and the Council of Basel', *Speculum*, 40 (1965), 1–14.

of the Celestines, so strongly associated with an image of papal humility through their founder, may have served as a unifying palliative. Perhaps more pressing, however, were political significations of a more domestic variety. Showing public support for the Celestines associated Bedford's regency with the royal style of Charles V and Charles VI and, moreover, the legacy of Louis, duke of Orléans, whose party had largely ended up on the side of the Dauphin. John's ostentatious generosity to the monks had the potential to serve as both a link to the past and a palliative to divisions. The inherited associations of the Celestines with both humility in office and sacralized monarchy may have enhanced their appeal within this context. As in the reign of Charles VI, the personal authority of the king was essentially absent: Henry VI was a one year old when Charles VI died and would only be present briefly in France (1430–1) for his coronation. Symbolic gestures and draping had to fill in the gaps, especially those which had collaborative, inclusive elements. Henry's coronation (16 December 1431) provides an example of this. On the one hand, it evoked grandeur: he entered the town upon a white horse associated with sovereignty. On the other, the ceremony reiterated the expectations and duties associated with majestic kingship: the Parisians put on a theatrical display of the life of St Denis, not just to remind Henry of this personal devotion required of a French king, but to highlight the defence of the Church particularly required of the 'Very Christian' king of France.¹⁰⁷ He also followed the practice of the enfeebled Charles VI of processing beneath a canopy, the same manner in which the sacraments were carried on Corpus Christi processions. As a whole, the coronation seems as if designed to present the king as a healing tonic for the realm.¹⁰⁸ In 1445, with Lancastrian power waning, it is no surprise that Henry VI's foundation charter for the Celestine house at Rouen again cited the religious duties of the 'royal office'.¹⁰⁹ Where force of arms and practical action could not adequately secure territorial control, co-opting well-established images of majestic kingship and the duties it entailed, of which the Celestines were one, might have been hoped to set the Lancastrian government apart from its rivals.

Returning again to the scene of Anne of Burgundy's funeral, it is now possible to see how an event already full of carefully orchestrated political and religious symbolism could be further enhanced by association with

¹⁰⁷ C.T. Allmand and D. Styles, 'The Coronations of Henry VI', *History Today*, 32 (May 1982), 28–33.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*; Guenée and Lehoux, *Les entrées royales françaises*, 9–18.

¹⁰⁹ Avignon, BM, MS 1438, 591 (transcription of Henry VI's foundation charter, 1445); see Chapter 4, 175.

the Celestines. The burial of a woman who symbolized unity under Anglo-Burgundian authority, whose presence had made the Lancastrian cause more appealing in France, took place in the arms of a religious order that, across so many tergiversations in both France and the Church, had been promoted as a symbol of humility in office and of hopes for order and peace. That the French Celestines occupied such a place reminds us that, for France especially, this was a period touched by a certain contingency and uncertainty, especially over issues of authority and unity. But the ostentatious promotion of the congregation also spoke to the aspirations of the age. Hope for renewal and reform was never absent: the association of communities that appeared pure, legally ordered, and united with royal and ecclesiastical government stood as a promise that a better future was indeed within reach.

'A fertile school': the doctrinal outreach of the French Celestines

You have in your house – and abundantly so – a fertile school, where you might learn [humility and fear]. You are planted in good ground, in fertile ground, in ground that I would call celestial: the Celestine religion, which is not inappropriately named after heaven. The sons of which truly can say, in the manner of St Paul: 'our *conversatio* is in heaven' (Phil. 3: 20).¹¹⁰

These words of the theologian and Church reformer Nicolas de Clamanges (c.1360–c.1440) come from a previously undated letter written to the Celestine monk 'Stephanus de Comblacio'.¹¹¹ The latter in fact is almost certainly identifiable with Étienne de Coublans (d.1439). Étienne would go on to enjoy a very successful career among the French Celestines: he was provincial prior from 1423–6, and also enjoyed spells as prior of Mantes (1406–8, 1420–3), Marcoussis (1408–14), Avignon (1426–9), Ambert (1429–36) and Villeneuve-lez-Soissons (1436–9). But these comments were made shortly after his profession, which is said to have occurred in 1403 at Mantes. It seems probable, given Nicolas's interest, that Étienne had some sort of university background himself: that he was chosen to act as the French Celestine procurator in negotiations with the Italian brothers in 1418 likewise suggests that his intellectual qualities were respected within the congregation.¹¹² The context of the quotation is that of Nicolas offering Étienne encouragement on how best to persevere in

110 Nicolas de Clamanges, *Opera omnia*, ed. J.M. Lydius (Lyon, 1612), 111.

111 *Ibid.*, 110–12.

112 Avignon, BM, MS 1439, 213.

his new estate. Nicolas, certainly the more senior scholar, naturally took the tone of a teacher. Educated at the royal College of Navarre at the University of Paris, the 'cradle of humanism' in France, he was not only a supremely able prose stylist, but also a brilliant spokesman for Christian reform.¹¹³ Like Jean Gerson, also educated at the college, he was also no ivory-tower scholastic thinker, nor a reformer who concerned himself solely with Church reform *in capite*. Rather he shared in the belief that his position as a licensed theologian gave him the ability – and indeed compelled him – to provide practical religious advice to every estate of the Church.¹¹⁴

The counsel and encouragement he gave to this newly professed monk came in the form of a short treatise on how Étienne could reform himself, tied around a vegetative image of growth.¹¹⁵ Étienne was to develop humility as his 'roots' for planting: he was to learn to love the little things and not hark after anything grander. His 'stem' was to be 'fear'. With 'fear', he would 'never be confident in his own strength, and never trust solely in his own ability to avoid offence to God and to fulfil his commands'. With 'fear' he would always 'rely on the counsel of others, as well as their strength and help': these would act as a 'stake' attached to the stem. Finally, this new plant needed 'water', drawn from 'healthy doctrine, through which, in love and desire for the celestial country, the mind is watered and made fertile.' Étienne was to search for this doctrine in the scriptures, but also in the 'charitable instructions of spiritual men', the 'mountains' from which these waters flowed.¹¹⁶

For this new monk, however, Nicolas preserved a tone that was far more celebratory than admonitory, and the advice he recommended was not his alone. The Celestines, as the above passage made clear, were the ideal 'ground' for his growth to take place. Nicolas is clear in his belief in the particular efficacy of Celestine reform; its 'sons' approached greater perfection in a life 'not unsuitably named after heaven'. The 'mountains' that he ought to listen to were portrayed as monks, rather than theologians, those 'most proven by the long exercise of sacred religion'. He was to 'watch their lives diligently, review their acts and works, imitate their manners' and 'rely

113 G. Ouy, 'Le Collège de Navarre, berceau de l'humanisme français', in *Actes du 95e Congrès National des Sociétés Savantes*, 2 vols (Paris, 1975), i, 275–99; C.M. Bellitto, *Nicholas de Clamanges: spirituality, personal reform, and Pastoral Renewal on the Eve of the Reformations* (Washington, DC, 2001).

114 Bellitto, *Nicholas de Clamanges*, 101–10.

115 Images of this sort of growth were a classic metaphor for both spontaneous growth and reform and had an impact in the Council of Constance period: see Stump, *Reforms of the Council of Constance*, 218–25.

116 Nicolas de Clamanges, *Opera omnia*, 111–12.

entirely on their teaching and *conversatio*'.¹¹⁷ The path he recommended in fact seems very reminiscent of Pierre Pocquet's doctrine: a deep fear of sin that could be encountered in the world but also through one's own righteousness, and a strong emphasis on both completing 'commands' and taking 'counsel'. Among the Celestines, Nicolas made clear, 'unless I am mistaken, you will discover in them the best school of humility and true religion, which removes men from concern for earthly things, and directs them towards God'. He also stated that he was far from alone in feeling this respect for the French Celestines: 'I took great pleasure from your letters; I was not alone in this, since there are several others with me who either read them or heard them read out and praised your decision.'¹¹⁸

Nicolas's milieu indeed spanned those parts of society where the Celestines were most successful in gaining support. He was well connected with lay and ecclesiastical elites – he intermittently served as a secretary to Benedict XIII and was offered a similar position with King Charles VI – but also interacted with other educated, bourgeois up-and-comers, including members of the same College of Secretaries and Notaries of the King (Gontier Col and Jean de Montreuil, for instance) that had helped found the Paris Celestine house. Nicolas's circle certainly included his theologian-reformer colleagues from the College of Navarre, Pierre d'Ailly and Jean Gerson, successive chancellors of the University of Paris.¹¹⁹ The latter is in fact mentioned, if not by name: the 'Chancellor of Paris' was apparently pleased to hear the 'praise' of his brother, doubtless referring to Nicolas Gerson, the first of the Gerson clan to join the Celestines. More than simply being pleased for his brother's progress, Gerson was apparently delighted 'by the hope he conceived in you [Étienne], just as if you were also his brother'.¹²⁰

If Nicolas's circle was closely aligned with the social segments that tended to show beneficence to the Celestines, this letter can be seen as his own gift to the order. His celebration of Celestine life would doubtless have been shown to others in Étienne's orbit. It is hard to imagine that Nicolas Gerson would not have seen a copy. But it might be no less accurate to say that Nicolas de Clamanges saw himself as sharing the gift of the Celestines with society at large: it is clear that he took care to disseminate the letter more widely.¹²¹ The evidence of Nicolas's own life suggests that, in his eyes,

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

119 On his circle, see Bellitto, *Nicholas de Clamanges*, 11–12.

120 Nicolas de Clamanges, *Opera omnia*, 111.

121 Nicolas himself began to compile his letters in c.1414–18, see Bellitto, *Nicholas de Clamanges*, 28. His own efforts preceded the wide-scale transmission of this part of his literary corpus.

monks of their style were far from simply a 'fertile' school for those who chose the monastic estate. Between 1408 and 1418, Nicolas himself had come close to something of a semi-monastic life, first at the Carthusian monastery of Val Profond near Béon, and then at an Augustian priory near Provins.¹²² The letter suggests that he may also have looked to Celestine example as he sought greater ascetic safety in his own life. His own ascetic leanings also seem closely tied to a wider ideal of Church reform that he developed during the Schism. In *De fructu heremi*, for instance, he drew hope that through abstinence, personal reform would take place that would support the reform of the Church.¹²³ Nicolas himself could hardly have been oblivious to the fact that the values he saw as critical to healing the division that wracked both the Church and France – imploring God's grace through humility, working to rebuild 'justice' and accepting charitable counsel – were far from dissimilar to those that he recognized within Celestine teaching.¹²⁴

If the evidence for Nicolas's ties to the Celestines ends here, for others within social touching distance it is often far clearer. Beyond the desire for prayers and Masses (although Nicolas asked for remembrance in the same letter), beyond public religious symbolism (although he could not have been unaware of this) and beyond the pastoral interest shown by the likes of Nicolas de Clamanges and Jean Gerson in guiding monks, the attraction often ran deeper. So too did the Celestine response. For many who inhabited Nicolas's world and milieu, as well as others from further afield, French Celestine ways and thought became an influential and positively received guide to personal and communal healing and reform.

Conversion patterns

How did new recruits like Étienne arrive at the gates of the Celestines? The evidence here is rather scant, and doubtless the causes were various. As already seen, the Celestines do not appear to have been an order for the lesser sons of nobles. Rather, they drew from a broader, middling and often urban caste. It has been suggested that Observant houses provided a new avenue for emergent bourgeois families to dispose of their younger

Compilations featuring this letter include Paris, BnF, MSS lat. 3127 (dated 1452), 3128 (1448), 3129 (1457), 3130 (c.1459–72) and 3132 (1486); Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, MS 2490 (dated 1462); Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 1652 (mid-15th century).

¹²² Bellitto, *Nicholas de Clamanges*, 26.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 38–47, 59–110.

sons, as older establishments had done for the nobility.¹²⁵ While this line of thought deserves more investigation, on its own it does not suffice as an explanation for Celestine recruitment patterns, especially given the rigorous nature of their life. Surely other, less arduous religious paths could have been manufactured to simply dispose of young men without options? This image also hardly fits with what we know of many of the Celestines. Jean Bassand, for instance, came from a bourgeois background and was said to have been prior at the Augustinians of Besançon before seeking a harsher vow. At Metz, we find both sons of artisans, as well as those who already appear to have taken up a trade.¹²⁶ Educated men like Étienne de Coublans or indeed Jean Bertauld, who was apparently Paris educated, surely could have found other options to forge a career in the world, or at least in a less severe order. Robert de Jussy, the royal notary who was pivotal in the founding of the Paris house, had apparently been a novice in the order before leaving and finding success in the world.¹²⁷ Pierre Pocquet had already had such a career it would seem, as a noted jurist. These accounts – bearing in mind Robert's continued support for the order – suggest that in these sectors of society, the urge to draw closer to the Celestines was often founded on a real affinity for their way of life. The same tantalizing possibilities that have already been raised concerning St Peter Celestine's early devotees and French Celestine benefaction again come into view. Might a monastic life founded on doing things in a particularly focused and correct manner have appealed to artisanal and bourgeois sensibilities, where worldly success might be found through similar qualities? At a more advanced level, might the elevation of monastic legislation to the highest spiritual level have been a draw for the professional classes most acquainted with canon and civil law?

The fears of the Schism period can be sensed in some of the evidence. Between 1388 and 1408, eight men from Besançon, including both Jean Bassand and Besonce Devaux, were professed at Paris.¹²⁸ The personal networking of Pierre Pocquet, who apparently hailed from nearby Arbois, as well as that of Gérard d'Athies (d.1402), the aforementioned archbishop of Besançon and Celestine benefactor, was probably important here.¹²⁹ But might their ability to draw promising new men – including some of their most

125 Zarri, 'Ecclesiastical Institutions and Religious Life', 58–9.

126 Chazan, 'Le couvent des Célestins de Metz', 16.

127 Beurrier, *Histoire*, 4–5.

128 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 17744, fols 35v–36r: Besonce Devaux (1388), Jean Birardini (1394), Jean Bassand (1395), Stephanus Prevot (1395), Étienne le Moyne (1399), Pierre Leclerc (1399), Jean d'Orgelet (1401), Eudes de Palino (1408).

129 Caudron, 'Poquet (Pocquet, Pierre)', 1922.

illustrious leaders – from a town over 200 miles away, within the county of Burgundy, the part of the duchy that was technically outside of the realm of France, have been tied up with the confused question of papal obediences at the borders of the Empire? Here contact with those of the Roman obedience would have been more common, rendering partisanship and uncertainty over the hierarchies that dispensed the sacraments more likely: the latter issue indeed received mention in Pierre Pocquet's *Orationarium*: 'Those indeed that one part says are absolved and clean, the other part reputes as polluted, fettered and unclean and, unless they are re-absolved and rewashed by them, ruined by God.'¹³⁰ It is notable too that no more monks came from this region between the end of the Schism and 1450. This is not to say that the choice to join the Celestines should be seen simply as a flight from perceived dangers. For Étienne and the Gerson brothers, their ties to those looking to rebuild Christian community on the broadest level may likewise have served to build affinity with a monastic group which approached reform with parallel and intertwining aims. As Nicolas de Clamanges's letter put it, 'hope' could be conceived in such men.

To judge by the Paris profession register, another happy recruiting ground in the same period stretched northwards to the diocese of Cambrai and even into the Netherlands, particularly the diocese of Utrecht.¹³¹ Again a combination of personal networks – the presence of Pierre d'Ailly (d.1420), Gerson's mentor and bishop of Cambrai from 1397, perhaps helped in the former region – and confused papal obediences in the Low Countries may have played their part: recruitment from these more distant regions was again a predominantly Schism-era phenomenon.¹³² But here, one might also cite the influence of Modern Devout tendencies, well known in these regions.¹³³ Given that movement also fostered a very proactive Observant Augustinian reform, we might remark again on the ability of deepening lay piety to inspire people to journey many miles and take up the most rigorous forms of monasticism, as if the next step in the path of purity and reform. If lay religious conscience is sometimes described as a threat to the prestige and relevance of vowed religion, one that required monastic reformers to

¹³⁰ Ibid., fol. 69r: 'Quos enim una pars dicit se absolvere et mundare, alia pars reputat maculatos, vinculatos et immundos, et nisi ab ipsis reabsolvantur et relaventur a deo perituros.'

¹³¹ Paris, BnF, MS lat. 17744, fols 35v–36r: Utrecht – Johannes de Brandenburg (1388), Johannes de Noerd (1389 or 1391), Theodoric Thasiech (1411) and Jodocus Rollant (1413); Cambrai – Alardus (1379), Jean Tassard (1388), Joannes Farmard (1403), Guillaume Bonnell (1404), Nicolas de Montibus (1408), Michael de Hoesue (1421) and Jacobus de Mosteriolo (1428).

¹³² Flanagan, 'Extra ecclesiam salus non est', 333–4.

¹³³ J. Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life* (University Park, 2008).

reassert pre-eminence and control,¹³⁴ at ground level the flow between the two seems more organic, cooperative and mutually supportive in this period of French Celestine expansion.

Lay religious direction

The French Celestines represented a very attractive source of personal religious direction for influential aristocrats and courtiers who could not or did not want to profess. For Louis, duke of Orléans, Philippe de Mézières and Louis II, duke of Bourbon, interest in the Celestines ran much deeper than political exigency, more genuine symbolic attraction, or even the procurement of vicarious spiritual benefits. Louis d'Orléans's piety might have been ostentatious at times, but his very frequent visits to the Paris Celestines probably reflected a genuine penitential conscience. There is no reason to assume that Gerson's story, seen earlier, of Louis seeking out Pierre Pocquet before his death to gain spiritual counsel in the midst of political turmoil was anything other than a fairly genuine reflection of a prince in his more private moments. Louis himself had done nothing to publicize it: rather, Gerson most likely knew of it from the private report of Pocquet, whom he clearly knew well. Louis's unfulfilled wish to be buried in the Celestine habit at the Paris house that is recorded in his testament – the circumstances of his death were probably behind the more stately burial he received at the same location – thus speaks not only to his desire to gain vicariously from Celestine sanctity, but also to a need to be one with the monks that found echoes within his life.¹³⁵ For Philippe de Mézières, who lived with the monks of Paris from 1380 until his death in 1405, the need for spiritual and penitential intimacy with the monks was such that he was prepared to place himself within a certain degree of enclosure and participate in the life of the house, living his own enclosed brand of 'mixed life'. Although he would describe himself as an 'abortive' Celestine in a letter to the knights Jean de Monte-Calvo and Raoul de Saint-Grégoire, he also portrayed his life there as necessary penance for his earlier knightly excesses.¹³⁶ According to

¹³⁴ Mixson, 'Observant Reform's Conceptual Frameworks', 71–2, 81–3.

¹³⁵ 'Le testament de Louis d'Orléans': Beurrier, *Histoire*, 297; M. Gaude-Ferragu, 'Le corps du prince'.

¹³⁶ Paris, BA, MS 499, fol. 148r: 'Nichilominus tamen ipsorum sanctorum dei Celestinorum abortivus'. Philippe also signs this letter with an alternative description of himself (a 'solitary of the Celestines'), *ibid.*: 'Philippus de Maseriis, cancellarius Cipri quondam vocatus, nunc vero Celestinorum solitarius.' This letter is also cited in Jorga, 'Une collection de lettres de Philippe de Maizières (Notice sur le ms. 499 de la bibl. de l'Arsenal)', *Revue Historique*, 49 (1892), 319–20.

the chronicler Jean d'Orreville, Louis II, duke of Bourbon, had apparently planned a similar retreat with four of his knights at his foundation of Vichy in the final months of his life.¹³⁷ The more morally questionable behaviour that could be found in some of their lives in the world might seem to jar with such desires: to modern eyes, the piety of the womanizing Louis d'Orléans may indeed seem like 'false hypocrisy' at some level, to borrow Jean Petit's phrase. Nevertheless, the studied efforts at repentance made by him and the others do suggest a deepening private conscience of sin that ran in parallel with their worldly lives. Being close to the most austere religious appears to have provided a sense of solace for such men which they simply could not find in other pious activities open to the laity. It is a dynamic that has been noted elsewhere: while these men found relief among the Celestines, Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, sought counsel from the Carthusians.¹³⁸ The material support that such men provided for the French Celestines had public purposes too, but their desire to have these monks in their world was often felt at the most personal level.

The story of Pierre de Luxembourg (d.1387), the famed ascetic cardinal in whose memory the Celestine house of Avignon was built, illustrates how external devotees could help draw others into this circle of influence.¹³⁹ Pierre, for his part, was probably always susceptible to the idealism of Celestine religion. He became associated with the congregation in his early youth at Paris. Several witnesses to his canonization process reported that he quickly fell into the habit of listening to Celestine and Carthusian monks chanting the office.¹⁴⁰ A monastic life was not an option for him, however. In 1384, at just 14 (far below the canonical age of 30), he was appointed to the vacant episcopal seat of Metz by Clement VII, the Avignonese pope; the power and influence of Pierre's princely family were thus deployed in an ultimately successful attempt to shore up support for Clement within a city that was at the borders of the Avignonese 'obedience'. There, the chronicle of the Metz Celestines states, Pierre visited the Celestine house on a number of occasions in 1384 and 1385 at the invitation of its founder,

¹³⁷ Jean d'Orreville, *La chronique du bon duc Loys de Bourbon*, ed. A.-M. Chazaud (Paris, 1876), 292.

¹³⁸ Catto, 'Statesmen and Contemplatives', 107–14.

¹³⁹ For modern accounts of Pierre de Luxembourg, see Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints and Visionaries*, 75–8, and R. Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls* (Chicago, 1984), 33–44; see also A. Canon, *Le bienheureux Pierre de Luxembourg* (Avignon, 1866).

¹⁴⁰ 'Processus de vita et miraculis B. Petri de Luxemburgo', in *AASS* 27 (Jul. II), 527–607, at 548–50; Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls*, 35.

Bertrand le Hongre, and heard Mass there.¹⁴¹ During his stays in Paris around this time, he apparently fell under the influence of Pierre d'Ailly and, most especially, Philippe de Mézières.¹⁴² It was while under the latter's tutelage, his abortive canonization procedures of 1390 (orchestrated by D'Ailly) report, that the most dramatic phase of Pierre's religious development took place. He visited Philippe within the Paris Celestine house at least two or three times a week, sharing saints' lives, prayers and devout words. Through Philippe, moreover, he began to converse with 'some other Celestines', discussing their 'way of living and the estate of their religion'.¹⁴³ As a result, he began performing a greatly expanded office every day, rigorously set to formula, and made confession no less than once a week.¹⁴⁴ Soon he not only fasted heavily, often eating nothing but bread and water and severely diluting his wine, but also insisted on mortifying his flesh in the harshest manner.¹⁴⁵ As cardinal (from 1386), he practiced flagellation, tied a cord tightly around his waist, and attempted to procure a hair shirt. At one point, he apparently tried to flee Avignon to live as a hermit but was dissuaded by his confessor Aegidius, who argued that to do so might suggest that he doubted Avignonese papal legitimacy.¹⁴⁶ While young Pierre continued to show sympathy for the Carthusians – he died at their monastery of Villeneuve-lez-Avignon –, his ascetic routines seem to share more in common with the Celestine tradition. In no small part, however, he had become familiar with their ways through the exhortations of a pious circle who were not themselves monks.

Only in the case of devout women do the interactions of the Celestines with lay piety appear anything other than organic and mutually supportive in the period under study. At times, they seem to have taken on the role of somewhat suspicious overseers rather than true supporters for those who were of the 'Beguin' mould: it is a trend which finds echo in other Observant examples.¹⁴⁷ From 1395, they administered the papal stipend for Marie Robine, a visionary devotee of Pierre de Luxembourg, and also appear to have paid some attention to another visionary, Jeanne Marie

141 Metz, BM, MS 833, 37, 39.

142 Kierckhefer, *Unquiet Souls*, 35; Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints and Visionaries*, 76; 'Processus Petri de Luxemburgo', 548–51.

143 'Processus Petri de Luxemburgo', 549.

144 *Ibid.*, 540–3, 546–8; 'Vita Petri de Luxemburgo auctore anonymo coaevo', in *AASS* 27 (Jul. II), 509–16, at 513.

145 'Processus Petri de Luxemburgo', 539; 'Vita Petri de Luxemburgo', 512–3.

146 'Processus Petri de Luxemburgo', 534–9, 549; 'Vita Petri de Luxemburgo', 512–3.

147 A. More, 'Dynamics of Regulation, Innovation, and Invention', in *Companion to Observant Reform*, ed. J. Mixson and B. Roest, 85–110, especially 94–5.

de Maillé (d.1414).¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the memory of both the visionaries in question was perhaps hampered by the Celestines: they were silent in their canonization proceedings.¹⁴⁹ The story in the anonymous *Vita* of Jean Bassand of that Celestine advising St Colette of Corbie while she was still a Beguine, if unsupported by other witnesses, might also fit into a pattern where the Celestines supervised or even 'contained' devout lay women.¹⁵⁰ Colette they eventually celebrated, of course. But by the time they did, she was already well known for her work as a reformer of the Poor Clares.

There is also the clear sense, however, that by acting in this manner, they filled a need that secular churchmen wanted them to fulfil. Marie Robine was effectively given to them by Benedict XIII: if he wanted to promote her visions, which for the most part supported his papal claim, he perhaps also felt the need to place certain limits on her through the governance of the sober Celestines. Any alarm they possessed over female visionaries was perhaps also inspired by Jean Gerson in *De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis* (1401), which the chancellor sent to Nicolas, the eldest of his two brothers in the Celestines.¹⁵¹ Where one gets a sense of the Celestines' own attitudes in this period, one can perhaps sense a greater openness. The *Vita* of Bassand in fact makes no mention of him prescribing an order for Colette, but rather only that she 'persist in her commitment to salutary virginity'.¹⁵² That Gerson felt the need to bluntly reiterate St Paul's warning regarding female visionaries – 'I suffer not a woman to teach' (1 Tim. 2: 12) – within a critique of the Spiritual Franciscan Ubertino da Casale's *Arbor vitae* that he sent to Bassand in 1426 is not without interest. In *De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis* he had already presented similar counsel to the Celestines: did he feel the need to repeat himself to the same audience simply because of the welcoming attitude towards female visionaries found in the *Arbor vitae*, a work that Bassand had asked Gerson about, or was it (and perhaps Bassand's interest in the *Arbor vitae*) partly driven by Celestine attitudes towards lay women?¹⁵³ It should not be ruled out that the French Celestines

148 N. Valois, 'Jeanne d'Arc et la prophétie de Marie Robine', in *Mélanges Paul Fabre* (Paris, 1902), 452–67, at 464–5; H. Millet, 'Écoute et usage des prophéties par les prélats pendant le Grand Schisme', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Moyen-Âge*, 102 (1990), 425–55, at 439, 441.

149 *Ibid.*, 441.

150 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 886–7.

151 Millet, 'Écoute et usage', 441; Gerson, 'De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis', 36–56. The dedicatory letter to Nicolas is found in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, ii (1960), no. 11, 49. See also McGuire, *Jean Gerson*, 131–2.

152 'Vita Joannis Bassandi', 886–7.

153 Jean Gerson, 'À Jean Bassand, 1426', *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, ii (1960), no. 56, 263–74, at 272–3.

had a genuine interest and even reverence for these lay women – if a growing caution over the visions that they might experience –, and also that, in turn, such figures could be genuinely inspired by them.¹⁵⁴ At the start of Colette's eventual rise as a reformer of the Poor Clares, she would create a lengthy edition of supplementary constitutions without much prompting.¹⁵⁵ The question of whether she drew influence from the Celestines in this regard is a matter that demands further specialist research.

If all this speaks to a wider context of later medieval religious dynamics, the background of events again appears critical in cementing the draw of the French Celestines for outsiders at the congregation's apex. If Pierre de Luxembourg's memory was deployed as propaganda both for the Avignonese cause and for the *via cessionis*, his overwrought pursuit of purity through a life of rigorous asceticism and penitence, as the most recent accounts suggest, is hard not to relate to his involvement in a schism that was so frequently related to clerical greed in its cause.¹⁵⁶ For Louis II, duke of Bourbon, the chronicler's tale of his planned retreat to the Celestines to 'serve God' is presaged by his sadness over poor government and collapsing peace in France.¹⁵⁷ His choice of the Celestines out of the two religious communities that he founded seems particularly natural in this light, given that Charles V, his brother-in-law, had made public use of the Celestines as a symbol of royal majesty.

These final examples might seem to support the notion that personal attraction to the Celestines in this period was fundamentally founded on fear over personal sins and corruption in the world. On the other hand, there was also something inspiring and strengthening in these attachments, and a communal energy to the way they played out. Louis II, duke of Bourbon, felt hope in the election of Alexander V (May 1410) at the Council of Pisa around the time he plotted his Celestine retreat: there was perhaps an element of thanksgiving to his decision to join the Celestines in prayer.¹⁵⁸ Even Pierre de Luxembourg was not unmoved by hope. Just prior to his death, girded by his ascetic efforts, he apparently planned to go on a diplomatic tour of Europe to heal the Schism with Pierre d'Ailly and other theologians and canonists in tow, an ambition he did not have time to fulfil.¹⁵⁹ Closer

¹⁵⁴ Similar dynamics can again be found at work around the Carthusians: see D.D. Martin, 'Carthusians as Advocates of Women Visionary Reformers', in *Studies in Carthusian Monasticism in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. J.M. Luxford (Turnhout, 2008), 127–53.

¹⁵⁵ Lopez, *Culture et sainteté*, 203–25.

¹⁵⁶ Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints and Visionaries*, 77; Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls*, 39–40.

¹⁵⁷ Jean d'Orreville, *La chronique du bon duc Loys de Bourbon*, 292–3.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 293.

¹⁵⁹ 'Vita Petri de Lucemburgo', 513.

investigation shows that the Celestines themselves were not only able to provide proactive, reformist proposals for Christian society, but also found an attentive and influential audience for them.

Reformist outreach

If one Celestine stands out for his external influence in this period, it is Pierre Pocquet. His writings found a respectable audience beyond Celestine walls. The *Orationarium* is known in at least nineteen late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts from outside of the order: seventeen were possessed by other religious groups and two belonged to aristocratic laymen (the brothers Charles d'Orléans and Jean d'Angoulême, the sons of Louis, duke of Orléans).¹⁶⁰ The *Dictamen de laudibus Joseph* is also found in a manuscript from the abbey of Saint-Victor in Paris. A French translation of the same work survives in another Celestine manuscript, which may suggest a desire to disseminate it to interested laity.¹⁶¹

Despite the rooting of Pocquet's doctrine in internal Celestine dynamics, it is very likely that the author himself thought his literary output could serve a purpose beyond their congregation, especially in the case of the *Orationarium*. The fact that he felt the need to address a prayer to the key figures of other orders – Sts Francis, Dominic, Maur, Bernard, Basil – suggests that, in that instance, he may have envisaged a wider monastic audience during the writing process.¹⁶² Its presence in multiple copies at Subiaco shows that, it could be a hit in other Observant Benedictine climes: perhaps it provided succour to the scrupulous religious of that house too. But Pocquet himself may well have had less reformed audiences in mind. The earliest

160 Paris, BA, MS 754 (Saint-Victor, bought in 1444); Paris, BnF, MSS lat. 1200 (Saint-Denis, *ex libris* of 1391), 930 (Charles, duke of Orléans), 3314 (Jean d'Angoulême), 14502 (Saint-Victor, before 1502), 14584 (15th century, Saint-Victor); Clermont-Ferrand, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 123 (abbey of Saint-Maur, 15th century); Cambrai, Bibliothèque municipale MS 238 (Saint-Sépulchre abbey, 15th century); Metz, BM, MS 631 (Carthusians of Rettel, 15th century); Vendôme, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 283 (*ex libris* of 'G. Alain', 15th century); Barcelona, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 572 (Carmelites of St Joseph, 15th century); Le Puy, Grand Séminaire MS 7 AV 018 (no provenance, possibly late 14th century); Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 802 (Cistercians of Altleite); Subiaco, Biblioteca dell'Abbazia, MSS cod. 286 (Subiaco, 1485), cod. 299 (Subiaco, 1456); Prague, National Library, MS XIV.F.7; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS cod. 1303 (Augustinians of Brixen, c.1450); Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, MS F 50 (Saint-Laurence outside-the-walls, *ex libris* of 1463).

161 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 14907 (abbey of Saint-Victor, 15th century). The French translation is found in Paris, BnF, MS fr. 9587 (Celestines of Ambert, 1462), fols 204r–216r, with the author misstated as 'maistre Jehan Rammeson'; see Payan, *Joseph*, 217.

162 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18206, fol. 151v; Lamy, 'Pierre Pocquet', 403.

known distribution is to Saint-Denis in 1391, at a time when Pocquet was the French Celestine provincial prior (1390–3).¹⁶³ That the Orléans brothers both owned copies raises the possibility that their father Louis had acquired it while Pocquet acted as his confessor. Whatever the case here, it is clear that by writing a life of Christ that removed Celestine doctrine from its more legislative expressions, that both moderated and explained the ascetic and reformist fervour he desired to inculcate, Pocquet had in fact made his thought most accessible to outsiders. Through the biblical themes of ‘cleanliness of heart’ and ‘peace’ and the Christocentric framework in which they were placed, and through his guidance for private prayer, there were aspects that were more broadly imitable.¹⁶⁴

Another factor may also help to explain the *Orationarium*’s popularity. If Pocquet’s frequent juxtaposition of his doctrine with the problems of the Church and Christian society – particularly the Great Western Schism – was useful in explaining the need for both rigour and unity to his Celestine charges, it also had the potential to give his ideas a pointed contemporary relevance for other audiences, and not only for their personal spiritual development. At points, one might even wonder if Pocquet had hoped to win over minds in support of certain changes in policy, especially given his royal and ecclesiastical connections. An atmosphere of repression against debate over solutions to the Schism existed in France from 1381, when the minority government of Charles VI, led by Louis, duke of Anjou, effectively banned public discussion of the issue at the University of Paris, and ran into early 1390s.¹⁶⁵ Writing in that very period, Pocquet’s words seem to critique that state of affairs in a rather unsubtle manner. Within the ‘Lament for the desolation of the Church (*Deploratio desolationis ecclesie*)’ that followed his description of the removal of the money changers from the temple,¹⁶⁶ he went on the offensive:

And alas, while this greatest sea of evils is recent, it is nevertheless lamented only by a few, and it is little attended by those who ought to remedy it somehow. And since it is worse that the truth should not be known of so great a division, the road by which it can be known is declared

163 D. Nebbai-Dalla Guarda, ‘Des rois et des moines: livres et lecteurs à l’Abbaye de Saint-Denis (XIII^e–XV^e siècles)’, in *Saint-Denis et la royauté: mélanges offerts à B. Guenée; Actes du Colloque international en l’honneur de B. Guenée*, ed. C. Gauvard and F. Autrand (Paris, 1999), 355–74, at 367.

164 Mixson, *Poverty’s Proprietors*, 175–6, 193–202, makes a similar argument concerning other Observant writings that bridged the gap to external audiences.

165 Swanson, *Universities, Academics and the Great Schism*, 67, 70–1.

166 See Chapter 2, 98–9.

impossible by them, perhaps fearing to produce their works in the light lest they should be exposed by them.¹⁶⁷

There is, in fact, a rather controversialist streak within his thought on the Schism. He was remarkably unpartisan given the time of writing and his own position. It has already been seen how he lamented the fact that there was not 'one true pope' to bring 'peace and unity' to the Church and to cleanse sin. But at no point did he suggest this was Clement VII, despite his connections to both that pope and the French monarchy that supported Avignonese legitimacy: he gave no obvious ground to a papacy and a monarchy that had granted independence to the French Celestines and materially supported the monks. Regarding the exact, practical solution to the Schism, he was somewhat more coy: superficially, he suggested little other than that his readers should pray for its end. This said, his praise of St Peter Celestine perhaps carried with it another thought that broke with the official line. While he began by celebrating his monastic qualities – his 'dove-like simplicity and kindness' and of course his physical asceticism, 'the harshest abstinence among all of those I have read about' –, he quickly moved on. The bulk of the discussion related to the founder's papal renunciation. St Peter Celestine had 'fled the papacy from ardent love of the saviour, and completely abandoned all glory, joys, honours, riches, delights of this world in a manner beyond all others.' Thus, 'the saying of scripture was most truly appropriate to him – "there was not found the like to him in glory, who in this kept the law of the most High" (Sir. 44: 20) – especially after he agreed to become pope, to be held in such honour, and to be placed amid such wealth.'¹⁶⁸ Reading between the lines, Pocquet seemed to be suggesting that one of his favourite, multifaceted doctrinal motifs – divine law – might require a pope to resign. Was he suggesting something akin to the *via cessionis* through his deployment of both Celestine example and ideology? The implication is hard to avoid.

167 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18206, fol. 69r: 'Et heu, hoc tam maximum pelagus malorum quamvis recens sit, a paucis plangitur, et ab illis qui aliquid remediare deberent minime attenditur, et quod peius est ne veritas possit sciri tanti discriminis, via qua sciri posset impossibilis ab ipsis iudicatur, forsitan timentes opera sua producere in lucem ne ab ipsa manifestarentur.'

168 Ibid., fol. 151v: 'Beatum petrum celestinum confessorem almificum institutorem et patrem religionis nostre, a quo et celestini nuncupamur, simplicitate columbina, et benignitate repletum, inter omnes quos legerum durissime abstinencie per innumeras afflictiones carnem suam martirizantem, ex ardenti amore salvatoris papatum omnem gloriam, gaudia, honores, divitias et voluptates huius mundi supra omnes alios ita perfecte deserentem, ut suo liberius posset servire creatori, quod verissime convenit sibi illud scripture: non est inventus similis illi, qui in hoc conservaret legem excelsis, maxime postquam papatus in tanto honore haberi cepit et tantis divitiis habundare: istum igitur angelicum virum devotione maxima exora.'

The importance of Pocquet's words within the place and time in which he wrote is brought into clearer definition when the *Orationarium* is seen alongside Philippe de Mézières's *Songe du Vieil Pèlerin* (1387–9). Philippe, present in the Paris house with Pocquet within the same period, wrote with a not dissimilar freedom over the Schism. As mentioned earlier, he had openly suggested another alternative path, a *via concilii* that was itself far from incompatible with the *via cessionis* – a council to elect a new pope effectively required resignations –, albeit that he reaffirmed his allegiance to Clement VII.¹⁶⁹ One certainly gets the sense that these two men had discussed matters. The older schism between the Latin and Orthodox churches, and the threat of the Turks, both issues close to Philippe's heart, were discussed by Pocquet as he led up to his longest attack on the Great Western Schism.¹⁷⁰ One can perhaps even envisage an atmosphere among the Celestines which allowed for important conversations to occur that could not easily have taken place in public, but which still might find influence in the corridors of power, especially given the presence of Philippe, a man with extensive court connections. The distribution of the *Orationarium* to Saint-Denis in 1391, a monastery with clear links to both the university and the monarchy, may even suggest that Pocquet and his allies were involved in creating something of a larger monastic 'back channel' with the aim of breaking the atmosphere of repression and bringing the Schism to an end.

Interestingly, it is clear that by the mid-1390s, when the French monarchy again became open to searching for new means to end the Schism, the French Celestines could happily be cited as a source of good authority on these matters. When Charles VI convened a convocation of the clergy in February 1395 to put pressure on the Avignonese pope Benedict XIII to commit to the *via cessionis*, the opinion drawn up in support of this path mentioned the 'deliberations' of the Celestines.¹⁷¹ Tellingly, the Celestine opinion in favour of the *via cessionis*, which unfortunately does not survive, is singled out for mention alongside those of the Carthusians and the University of Paris: the Celestines of Paris were local to this council – it was held in Paris – but so

169 Swanson, *Universities, Academics and the Great Schism*, 75.

170 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18206, fols 68v–69r: 'Greculi quippe adversus latinos insanientes eos scismaticos et innumeris erroribus implicatos appellare publice non verentur, eis in nullo communicare volentes, sed porcos immundos abhominantes. Et hii a turcis in captivitatem redacti sunt. Latini vero greculos scismaticos et hereticos reputantes, facta et dicta ipsorum in derisum habentes non compaciuntur afflictioni ipsorum, nec eciam eos ab errore misericorditer revocare satagunt.'

171 *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denys*, ii, 236.

too were numerous great monasteries whose superiors were in attendance. The relative weighting given to Celestine opinion may well bear testament not only to the wider reputation for purity and order that their congregation carried, but also to a positive reception of their own efforts to establish the relevance of their message and example amid these issues.

They seem notably absent from discussions concerning the French subtraction of obedience from the Avignonese papacy (1398), however.¹⁷² Perhaps they agreed with the position of Gerson and his allies who held that while the *via cessionis* was desirable, subtraction of obedience merely introduced further division.¹⁷³ The Celestines nevertheless continued to advertise the *via cessionis* into the first decade of the 1400s to judge by the *Vita* of St Peter Celestine written by Pierre d'Ailly, who had likewise not agreed with the subtraction. This was written at the request of the 'Celestine Fathers' shortly before Pocquet's death in 1408.¹⁷⁴ Largely summarizing the content of *Vita C* and *De continua conversatione*, its most important innovation in fact seems to lie in its explicit association of the example of St Peter Celestine with the *via cessionis*. *Vita C* had simply praised this resignation in a more defensive manner, affirming its rectitude by detailing the miracles that accompanied it.¹⁷⁵ D'Ailly, however, goes far further, depicting the event as an imitable example of humility before the attractions of authority, and one that illustrated the righteousness of the *via cessionis* in his own time:

Alas, Alas! If only this example of humility, worthy of honour had been imitated by those arrogant men, who in our own time, so miserable and grievous, are pressed to pursue the highest of honours, the Church of Christ, now for almost thirty years lacerated by dreadful division and abominable schism, would not remain so!¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² H. Millet and E. Poule, *Le vote de la soustraction d'obédience en 1398* (Paris, 1988). There is no mention of the Celestines in the bulletin of the vote edited here.

¹⁷³ Pascoe, *Jean Gerson*, 7; McGuire, *Jean Gerson*, 83. The Celestine house of Paris in fact possessed an anonymous work of this period which ultimately favoured the same conclusion, the *Altercatio subtrahentium et obedientium Pape, propter pacem et unionem Ecclesie* (Paris, BA, MS 499, fols 99r–133v). This copy (originally a separate manuscript with a Celestine library marking of 66B, later compiled as part of a larger volume), written in early fifteenth century hand, appears to be the sole witness of this work and deserves further study.

¹⁷⁴ Pierre d'Ailly, 'Vita S. Petri Celestini', ed. F.X. Seppelt, in *Monumenta Coelestiana* (Paderborn, 1921), 149–81; see the passage below for dating: the Schism has lasted 'almost thirty years' at the time of writing.

¹⁷⁵ *Die ältesten Viten*, 103–222.

¹⁷⁶ Pierre d'Ailly, 'Vita S. Petri Celestini', 174.

If this text did not spread far beyond the Celestines, one can at least see within it a conversation between the Celestines and an outsider concerning their sense of mission and purpose against the backdrop of current affairs. The ‘fathers’ of the order found an opportunity to focus the mind of a leading intellectual on the pertinent example of their founder; the intellectual in turn responded by reinforcing their position on the matter.¹⁷⁷

Taken as a whole, these facts raise some very interesting questions regarding the influence of the French Celestines and Pocquet in particular on the wider course of Schism-related politics. It has been suggested that the Celestines may have acted as a diplomatic back-channel to Avignon for royal policy following the foundation of the Celestine monastery there.¹⁷⁸ But were they just an ‘antenna of the court’, or a shaper of policy? The sequence of events is suggestive. Support for alternative solutions to the Schism found its place and ideological grounding at the Celestines during the repression of open debate of such matters of the 1380s. At the same time, the monks built an array of elite connections, drawing in first Philippe de Mézières and Pierre de Luxembourg, then Louis d’Orléans and Charles VI in the early 1390s. Tying the two together, it is certainly far from implausible that the Celestines’ principled concern over the Schism helped to shape the shift in royal policy towards the *via cessionis* that then occurred.

The Celestines and Jean Gerson

Whatever the exact pattern of influence here, it is clear that the Celestines of this period were finding a receptive audience. But one important figure – arguably the most important – in the Celestines’ cultural outreach has so far been left aside: Jean Gerson. His name has come up time and time again in this book. And yet, on the few occasions where other historians have discussed his feelings towards the French Celestines, a certain ideological wariness is usually cited,¹⁷⁹ despite his familial connections within the congregation from 1401, and despite his use of the Celestines as a distributor for his works. On the one hand, he and his closest College of Navarre associates, Pierre d’Ailly and Nicolas de Clamanges, certainly tapped into a vein of theology more commonly associated with monasteries than the schools, which strove towards a more experiential knowledge of God founded

177 Ibid., 164; B. Guenée, *Between Church and State*, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago, 1991), 145–6.

178 S. Comte, ‘Les Célestins du Midi’, 179.

179 McGuire, *Jean Gerson*, 127, 132.

on the strict regulation of the self.¹⁸⁰ On the other, however, the French Celestines were not just any monks, but Observants within a congregation already known for its rigours. How could someone like Jean Gerson, whose preferences for ascetic moderation and moral nuance are so often noted, truly sympathize with these severe and somewhat literalistic monastic reformers? Gerson's letter of 1408 to his brother Nicolas, which raised a question over Celestine ascetic practices, and his criticism of monastic literalism and its misuse by superiors in *De vita spirituali animae* (1402) have bequeathed the impression of an intellectual who long remained somewhat guarded towards their form of life.¹⁸¹ If it is admitted that Gerson eventually did grow in sympathy for monastic life towards the end of his life, his affections are said to have been primarily directed towards the Carthusians.¹⁸² This is despite the fact that the monks he had greatest access to were probably the Celestines of Lyon: he had moved to the city in 1419, and his brother, Jean the Celestine became the house's first prior in 1421. It was also to the Celestines (of Avignon) that he chose to bequeath his library of autograph works, even if he clearly wished the monks of Grande Chartreuse to have access to them as well.¹⁸³ Tellingly, however, no one has truly taken hold of one crucial detail: his closeness with Pierre Pocquet seems to have begun early in his career. As suggested earlier, the *Quodlibeta* may well date from a time (the late 1390s) before even his brothers joined. How can this be explained?

In truth, there were perhaps always differences of opinion, as has already been alluded to. In these pages, Gerson has often been found attempting to moderate Celestine fervour in one way or another, drawing them away from overzealous asceticism and unforgiving literalism.¹⁸⁴ But if there were differences, the firmness of this opposition seems greatly overstated. While he never took up similar ascetic rigours, he too could appear as an unswerving and inflexible moralist in some regards: for instance he was a severe critic of the sexual content in the *Roman de la Rose*. There, in a manner reminiscent of Observant thought on the grave and inevitable corrupting power of certain

180 Ibid., 115–20, 133–9; Guenée, *Between Church and State*, 262–3; Bellitto, *Nicolas de Clamanges*, 59–90.

181 McGuire, *Jean Gerson*, 169; Pascoe, 'Religious Orders, Evangelical Liberty and Reform', 509–10.

182 M.S. Burrows, *Jean Gerson and De Consolatione Theologiae* (1418) (Tübingen, 1991); B.P. McGuire, 'Loving the Holy Order: Jean Gerson and the Carthusians', in *Die Kartäuser und ihre Welt: Kontakte und gegenseitige Einflüsse*, ed. J. Hogg (Salzburg, 1993), 100–39.

183 McGuire, *Jean Gerson*, 289–90, 324–5.

184 See Chapters 3 and 4.

actions on human intentions, he cited the danger of even naming sexual organs, since ‘the imagination becomes active and it is imagination that creates desire’.¹⁸⁵ Meanwhile, Pierre Pocquet had also raised an awareness of the dangers of a literalism pressed too far and the need for reform ideology to proceed beyond monastic legislation in the *Orationarium*, even before Gerson received his doctorate (1394); in the *Quodlibeta* (c.1400) he was a willing ally to Gerson’s responses. Is there not a possibility that Gerson may himself have been influenced in his broader criticism of contemporary interpretations of written legislation by a monastic order where literalism had already come to be moderated under its own strains?

Similarly, Pocquet’s vision of authority and community was far from dissimilar to that which Gerson would come to voice in his at times impassioned, but often stilted, conciliar thought. Looking at the Celestines, Gerson would have found a community with a solid hierarchy, supported, albeit somewhat insecurely, by expectations of accountability to their subordinates that were both written into their constitutions and argued by other means. One perhaps does not find quite the same level of support for the power of an assembly in Pocquet’s thought as Gerson would later proclaim at the height of the Council of Constance, especially after the flight of John XXIII. But it must be remembered that the argument for conciliar supremacy that Gerson produced at that time appears to be something of an exception within his thought. It was made in response to an obvious failure of hierarchy and a level of controversy that never quite seems to have reared its head among the French Celestines.¹⁸⁶ In looking for Gerson’s core ideals around these issues, some of their most powerful expressions are in fact brought to life in his promotion of a devotional figure, and moreover, the same one that Pocquet had already used for this purpose: St Joseph.

185 R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, ‘The Debate on the *Romance of the Rose*’, in *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, ed. B.P. McGuire (Leiden, 2006), 332–41; Jean Gerson, ‘Le traictié d’une vision faite contre Le Rommant de la Rose’, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, vii.1 (1966), no. 320, 301–16, at 314, cited in Blumenfeld-Kosinski, ‘Debate on the *Romance of the Rose*’, 341.

186 J.J. Ryan presents the most irenic portrait of Gerson’s conciliar thought, relating it to the tradition of ‘apostolic protest’, in *The Apostolic Conciliarism of Jean Gerson* (Atlanta, 1998), Ryan nevertheless admits that the seeds of his conciliarism can only be seen from 1406 and beyond. Undoubtedly, he pronounced arguments around the time of the Council that tended towards a divine right of fraternal correction: see Chapter 1, 55–6, and D.Z. Flanagan, ‘God’s Divine Law’. Pascoe’s *Jean Gerson* offers a more conservative presentation of Gerson’s conciliar thought as a derivation of his insistence on restoring and preserving Church hierarchy. For T.M. Izbicki, however, even this treatment somewhat remains too irenic, given the tensions between hierarchical aims and conciliarist means: see his review of Pascoe’s volume, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 43 (1975), 806.

As discussed briefly in Chapter 3, one cannot be entirely sure that Pocquet's work on St Joseph was the origin of the novel interest in this figure that found currency within French intellectual circles at this time. But his corpus is at the very least the first surviving witness of contemporary efforts to reimagine Joseph as one of the most praiseworthy figures of the New Testament.¹⁸⁷ The fact that Gerson's *Josephina* – a poetic treatment of Joseph in the style of the *Iliad* – was also co-edited by Jean the Celestine over a number of years would probably have only increased the influence of Pocquet's ideas on that text.¹⁸⁸ Pocquet's writings also provide the earliest surviving source for a number of specific aspects of Gerson's doctrine on Joseph. The Celestine had already advanced towards the idea that Joseph was perhaps superior to John the Baptist by virtue of his close familiarity with Christ, and, moreover, consecrated from the womb of his mother, which would both become features of Gerson's doctrine.¹⁸⁹ Gerson's characterization of Joseph also follows closely that provided by Pocquet: a younger, active man, a husband and most certainly a father. In all of this they both broke with earlier writers.¹⁹⁰

There are undoubtedly novel elements, physical and thematic, in Gerson's treatment that are not found in the works of Pocquet. If Pocquet presaged the liturgical commemoration of Joseph with the addition of a liturgical office at the end of his *Dictamen*, Gerson designed a complete liturgy for a feast, which he promoted with gusto.¹⁹¹ Moreover, Joseph's claims to real marriage with Mary and in turn genuine (if obviously not genetic) fatherhood of Jesus are given far more technical scrutiny than they are in Pocquet's work. If Pocquet was happy to describe his subject as a 'husband' and a 'father', giving especial weight to the latter, Gerson descended into theological argument to defend the veracity of the marriage, opposing the legal argument that marriage was only valid once consummated. He followed the loophole left by Peter Lombard. The latter had defined marriage as a sacrament in which the two partners become one flesh and thus had power over each other's bodies: but the possession of power did not necessarily mean one had to use it. As Gerson would state in the *Considérations sur saint Joseph*: 'They were one flesh and one body by

187 On the development of Joseph's cult more broadly, see Payan, *Joseph*.

188 Ouy, 'Le Célestin Jean Gerson', 281–313.

189 Payan, *Joseph*, 175, 178.

190 *Ibid.*, 165–90.

191 *Ibid.*, 155; Pocquet, 'Dictamen', 67–71.

sacramental union, albeit there was no shameful congress.¹⁹² With marriage thus established, and thus his place as head of their household, the true fatherhood of Joseph could also be defended. But intriguingly here, Gerson turned to an idea which would perhaps have been more familiar to the former jurist Pocquet: the Roman legal principle which defined the husband of the mother as the father. As he would state in his *Prosa in honorem sancti Joseph*, 'Call him father [...] It is fitting with the strength given by marriage'.¹⁹³

The definition of real marriage was particularly important for Gerson, given the allegorical purpose he found in Joseph's example at the height of the Armagnac-Burgundian civil war and during the Council of Constance. For him, this marriage represented the perfect image of 'peace and union', as he would state in his sermon *Rex in sempiternum vite* before the royal court (4 September 1413).¹⁹⁴ Gerson's promotion of a feast of Joseph's marriage to Mary began in the immediate aftermath of the violent Cabochien revolt in Paris (April–August 1413), inspired by John the Fearless: the latter was indeed present for the aforesaid sermon. It also ran side by side with his attempts, continued at Constance, to condemn Jean Petit's defence of the 'tyrannicide' of Louis, duke of Orléans, which Gerson saw as an immoral justification of political murder and an obstacle to domestic peace.¹⁹⁵ The marriage also had clear importance within the context of the Schism. As he stated at the end of the *Considérations sur saint Joseph*, the union between Joseph and Mary was necessary to accomplish the divine marriage between the Church and Christ. Moreover, its example still spoke to the continuing bond between the latter two.¹⁹⁶ It thus formed a powerful example of communal 'reform', of human beings coming together in unity to assist in the completion of something divine. Beneath the surface, one can also detect a relationship between this reasoning and the thought he would deploy on the fraternal correction of the popes: the pope was a brother too, since he shared the same mother (the Church) and the same father (God).¹⁹⁷ Both images pointed to

192 Jean Gerson, 'Considérations sur saint Joseph', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, vii.1 (1966), no. 300, 63–94, at 64; Payan, *Joseph*, 57–8, 303–8; Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, 4 vols (Grottaferrata, 1971–81), iv, 435 (xxviii.4).

193 Jean Gerson, 'Prosa in honorem sancti Joseph', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, iv (1962), no. 107, 2–3, at 3; Payan, *Joseph*, 173–4, 302, 320; *Dig.* 2.4.5.

194 Jean Gerson, 'Rex in sempiternum vite', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, vii.2 (1968), no. 389, 1003–30, at 1030; quoted in Payan, *Joseph*, 154–5.

195 Payan, *Joseph*, 143–4, 153–5, 184–7.

196 Gerson, 'Considérations sur saint Joseph', 64.

197 Flanagan, 'God's Divine Law', 115–16.

a more abstract, divine ‘marriage’ and unity of the Church, one that might trump the claims of papal candidates where they led to temporal disunity.

This particular advance beyond Pocquet’s image of the Holy Family might suggest a greater irenicism in Gerson’s thought. That said, ‘peace and union’ were key beatitudinal emphases for Pocquet in his *Orationarium*; and on the other side, the hierarchical aspects of Joseph’s example were no less important for Gerson. Indeed, it is hard to avoid the impression that a major reason why Joseph – and not just the marriage – was important to him was precisely because it provided an example that softened hierarchy but did not break it. Here his treatment of Joseph echoes Pocquet’s. For Gerson too, Joseph was tender, ‘frequently placing tender kisses’ upon Jesus, as stated in his poem *In honorem Sancti Joseph*. He was attentive to his wife and submissive to God, but he was still a ‘father’, a ‘guardian’, a ‘minister’ over them.¹⁹⁸ As was the case with his Celestine friend, at the heart of the Gerson’s depiction of the Holy Family was a relationship of mutual submission, which he brought into even further clarity. On the one hand, Joseph acknowledged himself as entirely subject to God, obeying the commands of the angel; on the other, Christ set an example of perfect humility by submitting to feeble humans. In the *Josephina*, following the scene of the discovery of the boy Jesus in the Temple – the same point at which Pocquet introduced his own point on obedience in the *Dictamen* –, Gerson spoke similarly to take aim at all those puffed up by pride, rather than just the rank-and-file monks whom Pocquet had explicitly targeted:

[...] Gabriel, what
do you reflect on, seeing these things, when, behold, God
serves and yields on the earth, he to whom the whole royal cohort of
heaven
trembles before and honours, suppliant and adoring?
What will you say, mean, lazy pride of man,
deigning no obedience, and tolerating no labour?¹⁹⁹

In its temporal context, it is hard not to relate this citation of the proud to the criticisms of ecclesiastical magnates that abounded in the Schism period. Gerson here might seem to make more of this facet of Jesus’s submission – that the great too must submit – than Pocquet does. But elsewhere,

¹⁹⁸ Jean Gerson, ‘In honorem Sancti Joseph’, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, iv (1962), no. 135, 28.

¹⁹⁹ Jean Gerson, ‘Josephina’, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, iv (1962), no. 138, 31–100, at 93.

in his *Considérations sur saint Joseph*, the chancellor also presented it as an example of the preservation of ordained hierarchies. Here he spoke of ‘fathers’ and ‘sons’, an image that both referred to real families, but could also readily be taken as allegory for the spiritual family of the Church, which likewise abounded in ‘fathers’ and ‘sons’:

Consider finally, with regard to human instruction, whether there is an example more true, more clear, and more perfect in all virtues, and especially humility, the foundation of the virtues, and to confound all the pride of base human presumption, than to regard how the blessed Son of God, equal to the Father, wanted to be subjected to the law of men and to give an example that the greatest should obey the most feeble, and the son to the father, however much the dignity or excellence of the son is greater than the father.²⁰⁰

Thus, there was great virtue in the ‘greatest’ submitting to the ‘feeble’; but this did not distort the fact that the son should nevertheless obey the father. A point which could by implication distort normal lines of obedience was thus turned around to reinforce them, just as Pocquet did in his treatment of Joseph finding Jesus in the temple. As was the case with his Celestine friend, the turn to the divine law of scriptural example might not suggest the same level freedom of hierarchical action that it did for Bernard, but on the other hand, it did not represent a free-for-all in which anyone could challenge their masters. The ordained leaders were to be obeyed; but, from time to time, did they not also have to submit to those below them to avoid pride? The image was complex, but within it, fixed human hierarchies – and indeed that ‘law of men’ that Gerson elsewhere critiqued – were very much preserved as a necessary function of the divine order. It has been argued that Gerson struggled to find acceptance for the feast of Joseph at Constance for that very reason; while it is common to present Gerson as the most irenic of contemporary reformers, to others his doctrine here may have seemed troubling for notions of conciliar authority.²⁰¹ Through it all, as espoused in his sermon *Jacob autem genuit* at Constance, he hoped that through the intercession of Joseph, the bridegroom of Mary, the Church might find its

200 Gerson, ‘*Considérations sur saint Joseph*’, 67–8.

201 P. Sheingorn, “*Illustis patriachia Joseph*”: Jean Gerson, ‘St Joseph and imagining community among churchmen in the fifteenth century’, in *Visions of Community in the Pre-modern World*, ed. N. Howe (Notre Dame, 2002), 75–108.

'legitimate husband, the sovereign pope'.²⁰² Elsewhere, Gerson's concern to define Joseph as the one who transmitted David's royalty to Jesus seems pointed in the context of a Valois royalty assailed by the English matrilineal claim to France. While in the *Considérations sur saint Joseph* he found a model for princes to reform themselves towards the more perfect model of Joseph's humility and sense of duty, he perhaps also felt bound to preserve and defend the right of an existing hierarchy, however impaired.²⁰³

In their portrayals of Joseph and the Holy Family, a fundamental ideological sympathy emerges between Pocquet, the legally trained monastic superior, and Gerson, the great conciliarist theologian. Rather than being in opposition, one an inflexible enforcer, the other freethinking and irenic in outlook, they both seem to hold these aspects in tension, albeit at times in different ways. Sometimes they were punctilious, sometimes they were flexible; at times they seem domineering, at others they chose more submissive tones. Their place in the world was in fact dependent on a conservative outlook towards the role of institutions and indeed towards hierarchy. To a certain extent, both were doubtless jealous to preserve the authority they had gained. Pocquet had to flit in and out of provincial authority, but only late in life did he truly take a step back, bequeathing his mantle to Jean Bassand in the process. Likewise, more frequently than he expressed his support for broader forms of fraternal correction, the Church Gerson argued for was one that placed a hierarchy of theologians alongside the bishops as protectors of the faith. It was not, after all, the Church as a whole that had corrected Peter, but Paul who did so, an example that Gerson was most fond of.²⁰⁴ But in preserving the old, they suggested new balances in moral reasoning, and even new devotions, driven by a shared understanding of contemporary moral failings, greed, pride and disunity above all. Their thought sometimes escapes clear definition as a consequence: but in return, they became two of the most remarkably influential men of their place and time. Gerson found widespread fame, but behind his ideas perhaps lurked no small influence from another man whose tentacles of influence touched so many of the movers and shakers of his age: Pierre Pocquet.

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202 Jean Gerson, 'Jacob autem genuit', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, v (1963), no. 232, 344–62, at 362, cited in Payan, *Joseph*, 185.

203 Jean Gerson, 'Considérations sur saint Joseph', 70–1; Payan, *Joseph*, 316–17, 357–8.

204 Pascoe, *Jean Gerson*, 90–1.

That Gerson, openly influenced by Pocquet's work, chose to use the narrative of St Joseph's life as a tonic for issues of community and authority in the Church, just as his friend had done for Celestine communities, testifies to how far the French Celestines had come in their journey of symbolism, attraction and influence. Their apparent purity, order and unity amid perceived crisis, broadcast on a symbolic level, brought in not only monks but interested external followers. In turn, the Celestines were willing not only to provide spiritual refuge, but also to take the lead in providing solutions for the problems of the world around them. Outsiders could also craft their own solutions in light of Celestine ideas, even those that the monks had not explicitly declared as useful for the reform of wider Christian society, as in the case of Joseph. The French Celestine congregation had catapulted itself from a symbol of royal religion in the age of Charles V to a repository of answers for external reform in the conciliar period. And throughout, they managed this not in spite of their monastic status, but in no small part because of it.

Epilogue and conclusion

What was the legacy of this period in French Celestine history? What was the position of the congregation at the end of the Hundred Years War, at the end of the division in the Church that carried through intermittently into the 1450s? Their high symbolic status did not end immediately with the collapse of Lancastrian power in France. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Charles VII placed such value on the connection between the French royal office and the Celestines that he completed John, duke of Bedford, and Henry VI's attempted foundation at Rouen, at the end of November 1449, just a few weeks after having won back the city.¹ His words make clear that the previous grant of the Joyeux Repos manor (the duke's former residence within the city) – 'which the defunct John, duke of Bedford, built, constructed, albeit for from the moneys of our realm, and formerly resided in' – was as illegitimate as John's claim to the regency.² Charles, meanwhile, declared himself 'principal founder' (*fundator principalis*); by founding a Celestine monastery, he followed in the footsteps of his royal predecessors, and cited similar motivations to those that had moved his grandfather Charles V. The house was founded so that 'these same Celestines, as if a new plantation, newly planted in our Duchy of Normandy, which has until now not been decorated by a Celestine monastery, should pour out, we hope, the odour of sanctity upon all by the zeal of their religion, by the cleanliness of their way of life, and by the stricture of their regular observance.'³

These words of Charles VII – citing their importance within political society, but also the features that made the monks themselves stand out as reformers – stand as further testament to the relevance that the Celestines and their ideals had found in this period. But their attractiveness to such donors in the preceding years had arguably also rendered some of their monasteries as monuments to the confusion of that period. In 1436 or 1437, Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, built a fine tomb for his sister, Anne, duchess of Bedford, in the Celestine house of Notre-Dame de l'Annonciation in Paris. While built after his renunciation of the Lancastrian cause at the Congress of Arras (1435) and the French recapture of the city, the monument commemorated the Anglo-Burgundian alliance, depicting both John, duke

1 Becquet, *Gallicae Coelestinorum*, 69–71.

2 Ibid., 70.

3 Ibid.

of Bedford, and Philip together as noble mourners.⁴ Philip would later found a daily Mass for the soul of his sister in 1462, at a capital cost of 1320 livres parisis.⁵ This liturgical foundation, was effected when his alliance with Charles VII was collapsing and with it the dream of an independent Burgundy. Its foundation charter alluded to the state of affairs prior to Charles VII's victory in the Hundred Years War, making clear that Anne was to be commemorated as 'the "regentess" in her lifetime', by virtue of her marriage to John, regent for Henry VI in France.⁶ The result was that their monks said Mass daily for a 'royal' not acknowledged by the victorious Valois dynasty. Walking through the church at Paris, one could have seen Anne's tomb, in a niche at the rounded end of the choir at the north wall, situated next to the monuments of two other royals: Leo de Lusignan, king of Armenia (d.1393), and Jeanne de Bourbon, queen of France (d.1378). Close by lay Louis, duke of Orléans (d.1407), assassinated by the men of Philip's father, John the Fearless (d.1419). The oppositions of civil war and foreign invasion had invaded Charles V's grand royal monastery. In the Midi, the Celestine house of Saint-Pierre Célestin in Avignon would remain permanently associated with a schismatic pope (Clement VII, buried within) whose election, which had precipitated the Great Schism, was increasingly seen as invalid, and one of his cardinals, Pierre de Luxembourg (d.1387). The failed attempt of the procurator of the Avignon Celestines to promote the canonization of the latter at the Council of Basel in 1436 is perhaps suggestive of the kind of reception the monks themselves might have received from some quarters in the post-Schism environment.⁷ The decline in new foundations in the second half of the fifteenth century can partly be attributed to escalating costs and internal concerns over liturgical obligations: the very large endowment paid by Philip the Good for the daily Mass he founded for his sister bears further testament to this. But the fact that there were no more royal or papal foundations in the region from this point onwards – i.e. gifts from those who could certainly afford such ventures – is surely not insignificant. Aside from the continuation of benefaction to the Paris house under the Orléanist kings Louis XII, Francis I, Henry II and Charles IX, who honoured the tradition of their forefather Louis, duke of Orléans, the ties that bound the royalty to the French Celestines had been greatly curtailed.⁸

4 J. Chipps-Smith, 'The Tomb of Anne of Burgundy, Duchess of Bedford in the Musée de Lourvre', *Gesta*, 23 (1984), 39–50, at 40–1, 45.

5 Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1505, 199–201.

6 R. Vaughan, *Philip the Good* (London, 1970), 126.

7 See 'Commentarius Praevius: Petrus de Luxemburgo', in *AASS* 27 (Jul. II), 491.

8 McIntyre, 'Celestines of Paris', 107–10.

There is thus cause to believe that, for all their extraordinary impact and influence on key segments of French society – the royalty, the aristocracy, the upper bourgeoisie, and major intellectuals at the University of Paris –, they had, like Icarus, flown somewhat too close to the sun in the period under study. As for the Celestines themselves, however, their confidence and self-esteem remained high. In Pierre Pocquet's time, benefactors had flocked to them to provide for their salvation, while influential thinkers, such as Pierre d'Ailly and especially Jean Gerson, found that Celestine ideals and ideas were applicable to contemporary external difficulties, above all in finding the solution to the Great Western Schism: the French Celestines offered answers to pressing sociocultural needs. The monks would surely have been able to perceive how far their influence stretched: if, as argued here, they had lobbied for a shift in government policy towards the Schism from the 1380s, they surely would have seen themselves as winning. In seeing Gerson carry forth the message of St Joseph to the Council of Constance too, they might have found further proof of their ability to influence. If Gerson's demand for a feast fell on deaf ears, in his influence on the conclusion to the Schism, they could have sensed victory for 'their man'. He might have returned an exile – he could not return to the Anglo-Burgundian territories due to his stance on the murder of Louis, duke of Orléans – but he returned, in effect, to them: the man who had done so much for the cause of reuniting the Church at Constance settled in Lyon, where his brother was prior of the Celestine house of Notre-Dame de Bonnes Nouvelles. In this light, one can perhaps see why the writer of the mid-fifteenth century *Vita* of Jean Bassand got carried away in declaring, incorrectly, that Celestine pressure had directly resulted in the resignation of the antipope Felix V. But in this falsehood, one can also sense a shift: a transition from sought-after intercessors and advisors to those involved in the highest level of external affairs, towards being monks who imposed themselves wherever they could. If they imposed reform on Italian Celestine monasteries, they were happy to make demands elsewhere too. In 1453, Jean Bertauld (1413–1472) – quite possibly the writer of the *Vita* of Jean Bassand – would demand that the canons of Rouen elect a 'worthy archbishop' within the fractious atmosphere in Normandy that followed the end of the Hundred Years War, and then write again to congratulate them on doing so.⁹ With regard to other monks, he could not only be demanding, but unforgiving: he respected the Carthusians, but the Black Monks in his view had had their time. Writing to an unnamed abbot who wanted to stop one of his monks from joining the Celestines, Bertauld

9 Paris, BA, MS 1071, fols 45v–47v; see Gadby, 'Les Célestins en France', 267–9.

was clear that while the unreformed Benedictine order had once produced excellent monks,¹⁰ this was no longer the case: 'Where now [among the Benedictines] is regular observance, where is chastity, where is the flight from the world, the abundance of virtues, happy obedience and the merits of sanctity?'¹¹ Some of the self-reflection espoused by Pocquet – whose prayer to St Benedict in the *Orationarium* had stated, 'Alas, we have not served you well' – appears lost:¹² for Bertauld, it was others who had failed, not the French Celestines.

Such shifts were foreshadowed by the tensions between the ideological strands that they attempted to hold together. The *Vita* of Bassand reflected both the efforts taken by Pierre Pocquet and his followers to find a working balance and, perhaps ultimately, their inadequacy, at least for the goals the Celestines had set themselves. How could one truly maintain ascetic precision and still be as heavily involved as Bassand was in reforming the world beyond their walls? How could one fight sin and create reform through 'regular observance' while at the same time consistently remembering that law was the means and not the end? How could one perfectly enforce standards while always humbling oneself before one's brothers? The French Celestines of this period seem to demand all of these things at the same time, and vigorously. But at every moment, some paths had to be chosen over others. The potential for contradiction in all this would probably have been particularly obvious to the *conventuales* of Aquila described in the *Vita* of Jean Bassand – Celestines themselves and perhaps not so dissolute – whom the great French Celestine simply overrode, bringing with him allies from the papal court of Eugenius IV, 'regular observance' and an aggressive attitude towards enforcing it.

Even within their own French Celestine communities, theirs was a life not easily lived out satisfactorily in practice, every move eliciting more questions over where the path of purity and perfection truly lay. For converts who had willingly set off down this road in hope and expectation, the reality could potentially be quite disappointing, or even troubling, despite the immense efforts of men like Pocquet to keep everything in balance. Some, like Jean Gerson's youngest brother, Jean the Celestine may well have been driven to the point of madness by it. While he recovered and excelled as a superior,

10 Paris, BA, MS 1071, fols 36r–37r, at 36v: 'Dicitis etiam quin patres fuerit in vovis religiosissimi patres emeriti patres sancti quos ad vestram lucem, vestrum ab antiquae transmisit cenobium.'

11 Ibid., fol. 36v: 'Ubi nunc observantia regularis, ubi castitas, ubi mundi fuga, virtutum copia, felix obediencia, merita sanctitatis'; on Bertauld's attitudes to other monks, see also Gadby, 'Les Célestins en France', 279–80.

12 Paris, BnF, MS lat. 18206, fol. 54v: 'Sed heu, non bene servavimus.'

others left, as seen at Metz, unable to bear the burden of the French Celestine observance. In such Observant quandaries, one may well find, as James Mixson has suggested, the seeds of Martin Luther's thought, a man who had at one point fallen under the influence of a similarly scrupulous life among the reformed Augustinians. For what reason were all these spectacular efforts, if the results could still seem so distant from an ever-loftier vision of what good, pure religious life should be? What good were they if man and his religious communities could still seem so distant from 'reform', in its late medieval understanding? Was it not natural that someone in Luther's position might look upon such ways of life, say 'impossible' and attempt to have done with them altogether?¹³

Be that as it may, for the French Celestines such fault-lines within their religious ideology did not mean that they simply fell apart. Indeed, in the aftermath of this age of 'schism, council and war', the Celestines remained well established and ordered, and continued to command a good level of social esteem, even if benefactor interest gradually declined. Their monks could still form strong connections with the intellectual élites in Paris.¹⁴ Meanwhile the *gens* of the Paris Parlement still sought them out to play important roles: they looked to the Celestines for prayers (e.g. for the success of the Peace of Cambrai in 1529, for the health of Louise de Savoy, the queen mother), for their advice on the reformation of other religious houses and orders (the abbey of Saint-Père in Chartres, the Order of the Holy Cross, the Grands Augustins) or even for the detention of prisoners.¹⁵ Moreover, within the monastic world, their path remained an example that could inspire other reformers. In 1494, Guy Jounneux, a leading monk of the young Observant Benedictine congregation of Chezal-Benoît (the reform of its mother abbey originated in 1479) could cite them alongside 'the Reformed Congregations of Santa Giustina and of Germany' as well as the non-Benedictine examples of the Carthusians and Observant Franciscans, as groups that 'owed it only to the care of their legislators and reformers that they have not long ago come to great ruin.'¹⁶ The collaborative interaction of Observant religious and interested laymen – authorities, intellectuals, but also a wider public, especially in the towns – would go on to spur another major burst of monastic

13 Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors*, 221–2. His point would also appear to build on one made by R.R. Post regarding the origins of Luther's hard-line anti-Pelagianism. See R.R. Post, *The Modern Devotion* (Leiden, 1968), 520.

14 See McIntyre, 'Celestines of Paris'.

15 J.K. Farge, *Religion, Reformation and Repression in the Reign of Francis I*, 2 vols (Toronto, 2015), i, 11, 68, 252, 353, 366–7, 382, 720, 740–1, 744–5, 766–7.

16 G.G. Coulton, *French Monasticism*, 1503, *Medieval Studies* 9 (London, 1915), 4.

reform in France, from the 1480s onwards.¹⁷ If the Celestines themselves had perhaps had their wings somewhat singed through the relationships they formed with society in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, other reformed religious took flight. The rise of the Minim friars in that period presents especially obvious echoes of the Celestine story. A noted Italian hermit with a strong lay following, St Francis of Paola came by royal command to France to serve as the deathbed confessor of Louis XI. There he managed to rapidly expand his fledgling order, receiving backing not only from the royalty but also from within contemporary intellectual and bourgeois society. He built an order that, like the French Celestines, came to emphasize harsh asceticism in close contact with the world. The Minims also lived a life dominated by monastic legislation: Francis's extensive and unusually detailed efforts to precisely frame the behaviour, worship and discipline of these religious were ultimately approved as a new 'Rule', something that had not been allowed to happen since the early thirteenth century.¹⁸ The legislative creativity that underpinned the drive for 'regular observance', already witnessed among the Celestines, perhaps here reached a logical conclusion.

Returning to the French Celestine apex, their achievement should in any case stand as one of the most remarkable stories of religious activism in their age. They carefully developed an ideology that was responsive to late medieval Christian society and culture and was received as very pertinent to it. The economic realities surrounding the exploitation of landed wealth that followed in the wake of recurrent bouts of pestilence, a spiritual economy that demanded services that the Celestines were ill-adapted to, and perhaps too their own moral scruples, stood in the way of the kind of monastic expansion through new houses witnessed in previous centuries. Building sizeable congregations required a commitment to the reform of existing Benedictine houses, a commitment which the Italian Celestines had made in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and which Observant Benedictine congregations in Germany and Italy made again in the fifteenth century. For whatever reason, the French Celestines were clearly reluctant to go down this path. And yet they not only managed to expand, but wielded a sizeable influence over some of the most influential segments of French society. In this respect, they were more than the sum of

17 See J.-M. Le Gall, *Les moines au temps des réformes: France 1480–1560* (Seyssel, 2001).

18 R. Fyot, 'Saint François de Paule et la réforme des réguliers', *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France*, 65 (1979), 55–74; O. Krakovitch, 'Le couvent des Minimes de Passy', *Paris et Ile-de-France – Mémoires*, 40 (1989), 37–112.

their human and institutional parts: few orders, surely, have ever wielded such an outsized symbolic and ideological influence on their world. To admit this allows us to recognize the flaws in traditional narratives of monastic history. Monastic 'success' or 'decline' should not be measured solely in internal terms, whether it be the apparent peaks of affective mysticism of twelfth-century reform, or the enormous growth in numbers that one finds with the Cluniac or Cistercian reforms. In spite of itself, the monastic path had always led outwards as well as inwards, and rarely more so than in the late medieval example of the French Celestines. And on that external level, the equation that growing lay piety made monasticism itself less important also appears at least partially flawed. The history of the French Celestines suggests not only that monks could preserve their *status religiosorum* amid such external activity, but that piously inclined outsiders still looked not only to monastic ideals, but to reformed monks who they wanted in close reach: the Celestine interactions of Louis, duke of Orléans, Philippe de Mézières and Pierre de Luxembourg provide especially strong examples of this. For them, these monastic reformers provided something that they still saw as being unachievable through their own devotional and penitential efforts alone.

That in turn leads us back to the issue of the character of this age. It is understandable that recent studies of Observant reform have tried to steer away from finding causation in the shocks of schism, the Conciliar Movement or war. The spectre of broader later medieval 'crisis' narratives has left such monks ignored or denigrated by historiography until recent decades. And as seen both in the detours back to the early Italian order and the short summary of the Celestine legacy here, the *longue durée* is critical to understanding the origins of this style of monastic reform – which were certainly earlier than this period – and its lasting implantation. But it is equally undeniable that these same years marked an explosion of monastic activity across the late medieval West, with the Great Western Schism marking an especially obvious turning point. It is the hope of this author that these pages have helped to outline why this might have been the case. The French Celestine story here is not only one of perceived crisis and conflict, but of new hope for renewal. In standing for purity and for reform, and through their emphasis on precise conformity to monastic legislation and forging unity anew, they shone a light forward. They shared in passions that were felt on a broader scale and, likewise, the tensions they felt were also felt within the wider scene of reform. Gerson's interest in the French Celestines seems to have been defined by the fact that they faced and faced up to similar challenges that he perceived within the Church and Christian

society. There is much within these broader late medieval reform efforts too, and particularly the conciliar struggle, that seems to have been overreaching, impractical and ultimately doomed to collapse, at least with the benefit of hindsight. But to admit this much is not to say that contemporary passions and efforts were without influence and effect. Like their friend Gerson, the French Celestines lay at the cutting edge of late medieval reform, at a time when a pure, reforming Church still seemed within reach, if only committed men would strive hard for it. Strive they did and in the process, they captivated many who witnessed their work.

Appendix 1

Lists and map

French provincial priors from Independence (1380) to 1450

1380 – Pierre Pocquet
1383 – Robert de Bordes
1384 – Pierre Pocquet
1387 – Lambert Rolons
1390 – Pierre Pocquet
1393 – Jacques le Chien
1396 – Pierre Pocquet
1399 – Pierre de Guerot
1402 – Pierre Prudhomme
1405 – Besonce Devaux
1408 – Simon Bonhomme
1411 – Jean Bassand
1414 – Simon Bonhomme
1417 – Jean Bassand
1420 – Besonce Devaux
1423 – Étienne de Coublans
1426 – Jean Bassand
1429 – Simon Trouvé
1432 – Jean Bassand
1435 – Eudes le Roi
1438 – Jean Bassand
1441 – Simon Trouvé
1444 – Nicaise le Roi
1447 – Pierre Castaing
1450 – Simon Trouvé

Source: The information on the French provincial priors is derived from Nicolas Malet's seventeenth-century history of the congregation (Avignon, BM, MS 1438), Nicolas de la Ville's prospographical work of the same century (Avignon, BM, MS 1439), 3–75, and an anonymous eighteenth-century antiquarian compilation (Paris, BA, MS 5145, 547).

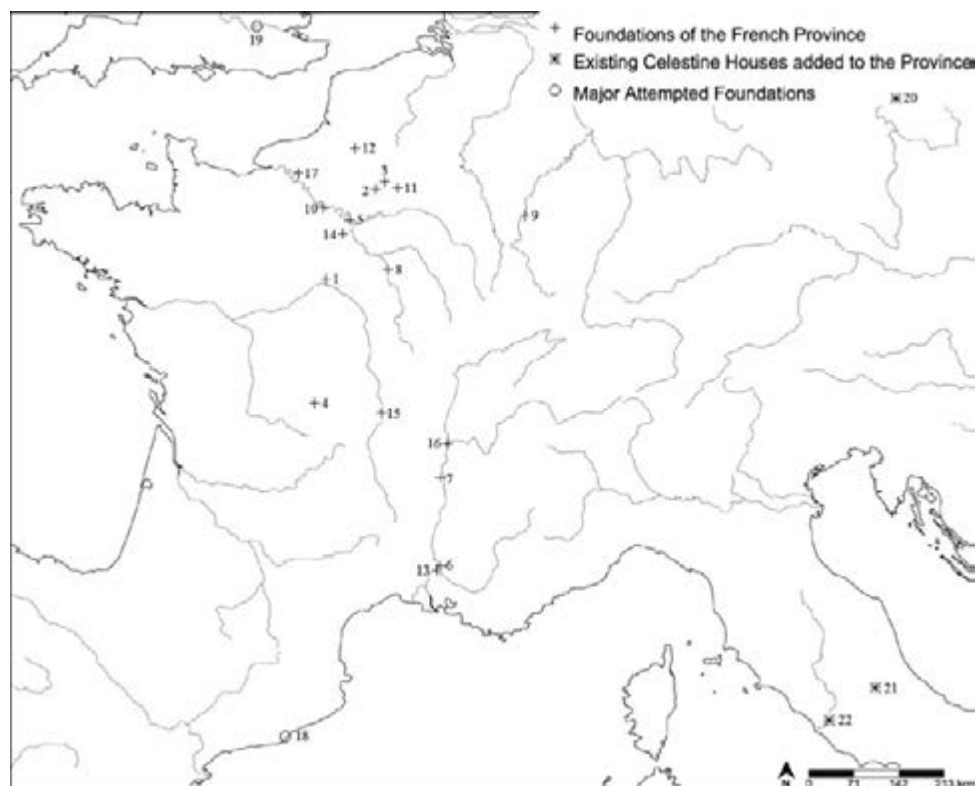
Note: For provincial priors before 1380, the information is less consistent. See Chapter 2, 88–9.

Celestine houses

Map no. [†]	House	Founder	Year of foundation
<i>Foundations in the Celestine province of France</i>			
1	Notre-Dame, Ambert	Philip IV of France	1300–4
2	Saint-Pierre, Mont-de-Châtres (forest of Compiègne)	Philip IV of France	1309
3	Sainte-Croix, Offémont (forest of Laigue)	Jean de Nesles, lord of Offémont	1331
4	Notre-Dame, Ternes (Creuse)	Roger le Fort, bishop of Limoges	1338
5	Notre-Dame de l'Annonciation, Paris	Garnier Marcel and the confraternity of the royal notaries and secretaries	1352
6	Saint-Martial, Gentilly (near Sorgues)	Cardinal Annibaldo Ceccano	1356
7	Notre-Dame, Colombier (now Colombier-le-Cardinal)	Cardinal Pierre Bertrand	1361
8	Notre-Dame, Sens	Jean de Mézières and Isabelle Bilouard	1366
9	Notre-Dame, Metz	Bertand le Hongre	1370
10	Sainte-Trinité, Limay-lez-Mantes	Charles V	1377
11	Sainte-Trinité, Villeneuve-lez-Soissons	Enguerrand de Coucy	1390
12	Saint-Antoine, Amiens	Charles VI of France	1392
13	Saint-Pierre Célestin, Avignon	Clement VII	1393–5
14	Sainte-Trinité, Marcoussis	François de Montaigu	1404–8
15	Sainte-Trinité, Vichy	Louis II, duke of Bourbon	1403–10
16	Notre-Dame de Bonnes Nouvelles, Lyon	Amadeo VIII of Savoy	1407–21
17	Notre-Dame du Val, Rouen	John, duke of Bedford, completed by Charles VII	1430/1449
<i>Major attempted foundations</i>			
18	Barcelona	Martin I of Aragon	1407–23
19	Isleworth, near Sheen	Henry V	1414–15
<i>Houses later attached to french province</i>			
20	Saint-Michael, Oybin (Bohemia)	Emperor Charles IV	1426
21	Santa Maria di Collemaggio, Aquila	St Peter Celestine (1287)	1444
22	Sant'Eusebio, Rome	Nicholas IV (1289)	1444

[†] Map no. refers to the map of Celestine houses.

Locations of Celestine houses



Appendix 2

Reductions of foundation Masses (beyond anniversary
Masses) at the Celestine monastery of Paris, 1414 and 1436

Ref. no. [†]	Founder (chronological order)	Foundation	Gift (in annual revenue unless stated)	Worth in annual revenue in 1414	Foundation post- 1414 reduction	Worth in annual revenue 1436	Foundation post- 1436 reduction
1	Jacques Marcel – 1320s, inherited from his chapel on the site	2 daily Masses	40 livres paris	4 livres paris maximum	Reduced to daily remembrance in convent Mass and office of the house	At best 4 livres parisis	Nos 1 and 11 reduced to daily remembrance in convent Mass and office of the house
2	Simon de Joinville – pre-foundation, a <i>chapel/lenie</i> at Jacques Marcel's chapel	1 daily Mass	At least 57 livres parisis 12sous, not amortized	12 livres paris (although still lacking amortization)	Nos 2 and 21 combined for 1 daily Mass	14 livres parisis (amortization unknown)	Nos 2, 3, 10 and 21 combined for 1 daily Mass – transferred to Sens and Lyon
3	Garnier Marcel, co-founder – 1352	1 daily Mass	24 livres paris, amortized	Likely decline – nos 3 and 10 totalled 30 livres paris (36 livres paris total at foundation)	Nos 3 and 10 combined for 1 daily Mass	1 livres 16 sous parisis	Nos 2, 3, 10 and 21 combined for 1 daily Mass – transferred to Sens and Lyon
4	Secretaries and Notaries of the King, co-founder – 1352	1 daily Mass	A chancery <i>bourse</i> of c.150 livres paris	'Well founded' (no further details)	1 daily Mass	Well founded (no further details)	1 daily Mass
5	Alexandra de Besançon – d.1357	4 Masses per week	20 livres paris	4 livres paris	Nos 5, 22, 23, 24 and 25 combined for 1 daily Mass	4 livres paris	Nos 5, 19 and 22 combined for 1 daily Mass – transferred to rotation across the province

Ref. no. [†]	Founder (chronological order)	Foundation	Gift (in annual revenue unless stated)	Worth in annual revenue in 1414	Foundation post-1414 reduction	Worth in annual revenue 1436	Foundation post-1436 reduction
6	Louis, count of Étampes – 1367	2 daily Masses	200 livres parisis, amortized	'Well founded' (no further details)	2 daily Masses	No yield	Omitted unless incomes return
7	Robert de Jussy, royal secretary – d.1372 or before	2 Masses per week	c.20 livres parisis	Likely decline – nos 7, 8 and 20 totalled 32 livres parisis (64 livres parisis total at foundation)	Nos 7, 8 and 20 combined for 1 daily Mass	6 livres parisis	Nos 7, 9, 12, 14 and 23 combined for 6 Masses per week
8	Pierre de Castro, clerk of Robert de Jussy – 1372	1 daily Mass	22 livres parisis, stated as not amortized	Likely decline – nos 7, 8 and 20 totalled 32 livres parisis (64 livres parisis combined total at foundation)	Nos 7, 8 and 20 combined for 1 daily Mass	No yield, although 10 livres parisis (still not amortized) expected in better times	Nos 8, 20, 24 and 25 combined for 3 Masses per week – transferred to Offémont; Colombier and Mont-de-Châtres
9	Jean Oleari, royal clerk – d.1373	1 Mass per week	10 livres parisis in rents within Paris	'Not well founded'	Omitted	59 sous 6 deniers parisis	Nos 7, 9, 12, 14 and 23 combined for 6 Masses per week
10	Eustache de Morsant – d.1373	4 Masses per week	200 francs for buying rents and 61 sous parisis in existing rents, converted to a total of 12 livres parisis in rents	Likely decline – nos 3 and 10 totalled 30 livres parisis (36 livres parisis combined total at foundation)	Nos 3 and 10 combined for 1 daily Mass	8 livres 8 sous parisis	Nos 2, 3, 10 and 21 combined for 1 daily Mass – transferred to Sens and Lyon

Ref. no. [†]	Founder (chronological order)	Foundation	Gift (in annual revenue unless stated)	Worth in annual revenue in 1414	Foundation post- 1414 reduction	Worth in annual revenue 1436	Foundation post- 1436 reduction
11	Charles V – d.1380	1 daily Mass	30 livres parisis, amortized, derived from 500 livres parisis in cash; both acts take account of his many other gifts	'Well founded' (no further details)	1 daily Mass	Unknown	Nos 1 and 11 reduced to daily remembrance in convent Mass and office of the house
12	Adam de Melun (in favour of his brother, Guil- laume de Melun, archbishop of Sens) – d.1378	1 daily Mass	c.40 livres parisis, amortized	Decline – nos 12 and 14 totalled 32 livres parisis (65 livres parisis combined total at foundation)	Nos 12 and 14 combined for 1 daily Mass	Likely further decline – nos 12 and 14 totalled less than 32 livres parisis even in 'good times'	Nos 7, 9, 12, 14 and 23 combined for 6 Masses per week
13	Nicolas de Plancy – 1392	1 Mass per year (not an obit)	20 sous	'Not well founded'	Omitted	Well founded (no further details)	1 Mass per year
14	Jean and Bureau de la Rivière, royal courtiers – d.1366 and 1402	4 Masses per week	c.25 livres parisis	Likely decline – nos 12 and 14 totalled 32 livres parisis (65 livres parisis combined total at foundation)	Nos 12 and 14 combined for 1 daily mass	Likely further decline – nos. 12 and 14 totalled less than 32 livres parisis even in 'good times'	Nos 7, 9, 12, 14 and 23 combined for 6 masses per week
15	Jean de Coissy, royal clerk – d.1403	1 Mass per week, and foundation of 2 brothers	2500 francs in cash and a house	'Not well founded'	Omitted	100 francs amortized	No. 15 and weekly Mass of no. 18 com- bined for 1 Mass per week – transferred to Sens and Lyon

Ref. no. [†]	Founder (chronological order)	Foundation	Gift (in annual revenue unless stated)	Worth in annual revenue in 1414	Foundation post-1414 reduction	Worth in annual revenue 1436	Foundation post-1436 reduction
16	Philippe de Mézières, royal counsellor – d.1405	1 chapel dedication Mass annually	800 francs in cash converted to 80 livres paris in rents, amortized by Charles V; both acts take into account his other gifts	Not given	1 Mass per year	Not given	1 Mass per year
17	Louis, duke of Orléans – d.1408	1 daily Mass	2000 francs in cash or 100 livres paris amortized	Well founded (no further details)	1 daily Mass	Well founded (no further details)	1 daily Mass
18	Philippe de Moulins, bishop of Noyon – d.1409	1 Mass per week, 2 anniversaries, also 12 low Masses of requiem per year, 1 brother	20 livres paris sited in Picardy (although he also gave 400 livres paris in cash to help build their infirmary)	'Not well founded'	Omitted	Exact value not given, but stated no longer to be worth its original value	No. 15 and weekly Mass of no. 18 combined for 1 Mass per week – transferred to Sens and Lyon; monthly Mass retained
19	Jean Audou – before 1414	1 daily Mass	63 livres, 13 sous paris (not amortized)	Well founded (no further details)	1 daily Mass	35 livres paris	Nos 5, 19 and 22 combined for 1 daily Mass – transferred to rotation across the province

Ref. no. [†]	Founder (chronological order)	Foundation	Gift (in annual revenue unless stated)	Worth in annual revenue in 1414	Foundation post- 1414 reduction	Worth in annual revenue 1436	Foundation post- 1436 reduction
20	Pierre Coquelet, citizen of Paris – before 1414	3 Masses per week	c.24 livres parisis, not amortized	Likely decline – nos 7, 8 and 20 totalled 32 livres parisis (64 livres parisis combined total at foundation)	Combined with the foundation Robert de Jussy (no. 7) for 1 daily Mass	No yield, but 10 livres parisis expected in better times	Nos 8, 20, 24 and 25 combined for 3 Masses per week – transferred to Offémont, Colombier and Mont-de-Châtres
21	Baudouin de Cerny and his wife Marie la Marcaise – before 1414	1 daily Mass	380 francs in cash(along with 4 candelabras worth 20 francs), converted to 16 livres parisis in rents, and a further 10 livres parisis in annual revenue, not amortized	c.18 livres parisis (not stated, but combined worth with no. 2 is 30 livres parisis)	Nos 2 and 21 combined for 1 daily Mass	26 livres parisis	Nos 2, 3, 10 and 21 combined for 1 daily Mass – transferred to Sens and Lyon
22	Étienne Canu and his wife – before 1414	1 daily Mass	30 livres parisis (or 24 livres parisis amortized according to the 1436 act)	Certain decline – nos 5, 22, 23, 24 and 25 totalled 32 livres parisis (more than 53 livres 8 sous parisis combined total at foundation)	Nos 5, 22, 23, 24 and 25 combined for 1 daily Mass	20 livres parisis	Nos 5, 19 and 22 combined for 1 daily Mass – transferred to rotation across the province

Ref. no. [†]	Founder (chronological order)	Foundation	Gift (in annual revenue unless stated)	Worth in annual revenue in 1414	Foundation post- 1414 reduction	Worth in annual revenue 1436	Foundation post- 1436 reduction
23	François de Montaigu, secretary of the king – before 1414	2 Masses per week	At least 6 livres parisis 8 sous	Possible decline – nos 5, 22, 23, 24 and 25 totalled 32 livres parisis (more than 53 livres 8 sous parisis combined total at foundation)	Nos 5, 22, 23, 24 and 25 combined for 1 daily Mass	4 livres parisis	Nos 7, 9, 12, 14 and 23 combined for 6 Masses per week
24	Eustache Godrie – before 1414	2 Masses per week	60 sous parisis in rent and a gift of 100 francs	Possible decline – nos 5, 22, 23, 24 and 25 totalled 32 livres parisis (more than 53 livres 8 sous parisis combined total at foundation)	Nos 5, 22, 23, 24 and 25 combined for 1 daily Mass	No more than 60 sous parisis	Nos 8, 20, 24 and 25 combined for 3 Masses per week – transferred to Offémont, Colombier and Mont-de-Châtres
25	Pierre Cramette – before 1414	1 Mass per week	100 francs spent on an unspecified rent in Paris	Possible decline – nos 5, 22, 23, 24 and 25 totalled 32 livres parisis (more than 53 livres 8 sous parisis combined total at foundation)	Nos 5, 22, 23, 24 and 25 combined for 1 daily Mass	60 sous parisis	Nos 8, 20, 24 and 25 combined for 3 Masses per week – transferred to Offémont, Colombier and Mont-de-Châtres
26	Étienne Chevron – before 1414	1 Mass per month (and 1 anniversary obit)	200 écus d'or in cash, from which 110 sous parisis rent on a house in Paris	'Not well founded'	Omitted	110 sous parisis	1 Mass per month

Ref. no. [†]	Founder (chronological order)	Foundation	Gift (in annual revenue unless stated)	Worth in annual revenue in 1414	Foundation post- 1414 reduction	Worth in annual revenue 1436	Foundation post- 1436 reduction
27	Jean Cudoe – before 1414	1 Mass per year (not an anniversary obit)	Initial value unknown (gave a certain part of the land in Paris oper- ated by the Celestines as a vineyard)	'Not well founded'	Omitted	Unknown	1 Mass per year
28	Jean de Noyant – before 1414	1 Mass per year (not an anniversary obit)	20 francs in cash, converted to 20 sous parisis in rents	'Not well founded'	Omitted	20 sous parisis	1 Mass per year
29	Philippe Ogier, royal secretary – before 1414	1 Mass per year (not an anniversary obit)	Gave an ornament rather than an income	'Not well founded'	Omitted	NA	1 Mass per year
30	Robert d'Allemagne – before 1414	4 Masses per year	4 livres parisis in rents	'Not well founded'	Omitted	4 livres parisis	4 Masses per year
31	Renault Ruffy – post-1414, before 1436	1 daily Mass (and 1 brother)	4000 écus d'or in cash	NA [‡]	NA	Now supported by the incomes of nos 2, 3, 10, 15, 18 and 21 (Masses transferred to Sens and Lyon), c.140 livres parisis	1 daily Mass (and 1 brother)

Ref. no. [†]	Founder (chronological order)	Foundation	Gift (in annual revenue unless stated)	Worth in annual revenue in 1414	Foundation post-1414 reduction	Worth in annual revenue 1436	Foundation post-1436 reduction
32	Jeanne de Rully, wife of Jean de Marchia – post-1414, before 1436	1 Mass per week	200 livres paris in cash, converted to 10 livres paris in rents on houses in Paris	NA	NA	Houses now wholly owned, although 200 livres paris was spent on restoration work	2 Masses per week
33	Nicolas du Pont – post-1414, before 1436	2 Masses per week	400 livres tournois (320 livres paris) in cash, revenue unstated	NA	NA	No decline mentioned	2 Masses per week
34	Guillaume de Neuville – post-1414, before 1436	3 Masses per week (also 1 obit and 1 brother)	600 francs in cash, revenue unstated	NA	NA	Now supported by the incomes of nos 8, 20, 24 and 25 (Masses transferred to Offémont, Colombier and Mont-de-Châtres), c.36 livres paris.	3 Masses per week
35	Alain de Mauny – post-1414, before 1436	1 Mass per year (not an anniversary obit)	10 livres paris revenue	NA	NA	Revenue used to purchase the land on which it was sited outright	1 Mass per year

Ref. no. [†]	Founder (chronological order)	Foundation	Gift (in annual revenue unless stated)	Worth in annual revenue in 1414	Foundation post-1414 reduction	Worth in annual revenue 1436	Foundation post-1436 reduction
36	Milon de Danguel – post-1414, before 1436	1 daily Mass (and 2 brothers)	300 livres tournois revenue in times of peace, but depopulated at time of foundation, not amortized	NA	NA	Not stated	Not yet said until incomes reach a satisfactory level

Source: drawn from Paris, Arch. Nat., LL/1505, and Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3330.

[†] Foundations are discussed by number in the fifth, sixth and eighth columns.

[‡] Not applicable

Appendix 3

Reduction of foundation Masses (beyond anniversary masses) at the Celestine monastery of Sens, 1414

Founder (chronological order)	Foundation	Gift (in annual revenue unless stated)	Worth in annual revenue in 1414	Foundation post-1414 reduction
Jean Clement – 1356 (founded at Jean de Mézières's chapel prior to the coming of the Celestines)	1 Mass per month; the Celestines allege that he removed this obligation after the monks took over the chapels, but that they had nevertheless felt compelled to continue saying the Mass	Originally 6 livres tournois a year; after negotiation with Jean, the monks received 10 livres tournois without any fixed burden	Unknown	Omitted
Jean de Mézières and Isabelle Bilouard, founders – 1366	15 Masses per week at the chapels; 1 additional obit Mass per week, 5 special obits per year in Jean's will	Chapels originally founded at 70 livres tournois annual revenue. Isabelle added 100 livres tournois of rents and promised 1000 francs in cash for completing the house and buying rents, which she later could not afford (she made them her sole heirs)	70 livres tournois in total	1 Mass per week, 1 anniversary Mass
Jean Chacerat	1 daily Mass, with 3 anniversaries assigned in different parts of the year; had apparently stipulated that the burden might decline if the assigned revenues reduced	40 livres tournois, not amortized	Less than 20 livres tournois, not amortized	4 Masses a week
Drocho de veteri castro, bourgeois of Sens – c.1380	1 Mass every Monday	45 sous tournois, not amortized	Unknown	1 or 2 Masses a month

Founder (chronological order)	Foundation	Gift (in annual revenue unless stated)	Worth in annual revenue in 1414	Foundation post-1414 reduction
Philippe Ogier, royal secretary and bourgeois of Sens – c.1380	1 Mass every Tuesday (alongside an anniversary Mass)	9 livres tournois, not amortized, drawn from a house in Sens.	Unknown	Omitted (anniversary Mass remains)
Louis, duke of Orléans – d.1407	1 daily Mass	Promised 100 livres tournois amortized or 2000 francs in cash – only delivers 1000 francs cash and amortization for 100 livres parisis of revenue	Unknown	4 Masses per week and an anniversary Mass
Philippe de Moulins, bishop of Noyons – d.1409	1 convent Mass every Saturday of the holy Virgin Mary (alongside 1 anniversary Mass, 1 daily antiphon and collects of his specification)	Originally 80 francs in cash to be placed in rents (with his consent, the monks use this to help build the dormitory, refectory and chapter; executors of his will then give another 60 francs in cash to be placed in rents in support of the Mass)	Unknown	1 convent Mass every Saturday; 1 collect removed
Widow of Jean Aurefabri, bourgeois of Sens	1 Mass every Thursday (alongside 1 anniversary Mass)	Estimated at 15 livres tournois, not amortized	11 livres 15 sous tournois. not amortized	1 Mass every Thursday; only the anniversary Mass is combined with others
Guillaume Chaton, bourgeois of Sens	1 Mass every Wednesday (alongside 1 anniversary Mass)	200 francs in cash, spent on the purchase of a house; no money given for amortization; separate payment for the anniversary Mass	Unknown	1 Mass every Wednesday; only the anniversary Mass is combined with others

Founder (chronological order)	Foundation	Gift (in annual revenue unless stated)	Worth in annual revenue in 1414	Foundation post-1414 reduction
Pierre de Navarre, count of Mortain – d.1412	2 Masses every month, along with 2 anniversary convent Masses every year (also founded 1 chapel with 2 priest brothers)	45 livres tournois	Unknown	2 Masses every month, along with 2 anniversary convent Masses every year; other stipulations retained
‘Certain citizens of Sens’	2 Masses per month	12 livres tournois, not amortized	Unknown	2 Masses per year

Source: ‘Célestins de Sens, obituaires’, in *Obituaires de la Province de Sens*, ed. A. Molinier, vol. i of *Recueil des historiens de la France, obituaires*, 4 vols (Paris, 1902), 890–916, at 900–16.

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